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विश्वास, विकास और
जनकल्याण के



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**For me, the people
represent God."
Serving Mother
India for this long
is a special grace**

श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी

Prime Minister
Shri Narendra Modi



Remarks of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

आज का दिन आप सभी ने मेरे लिए बहुत यादगार बना दिया है। मैं अभिभूत हूँ। कृतज्ञ हूँ। चैरेवेति-चैरेवेति के मंत्र का जाप करते हुए इस राजनीतिक यात्रा में अनेक उतार-चढ़ाव देखते हुए एक दिन यह पड़ाव भी आएगा। मैंने कभी सोचा नहीं था। निर्वाचित प्रधानमंत्री के रूप में निरंतर सबसे लंबी अवधि तक सेवा करने का अवसर, इसे मैं अपना परम सौभाग्य मानता हूँ।

इतने लंबे समय तक मां भारती की सेवा का सौभाग्य मिलना ईश्वर की विशेष कृपा से ही संभव हो सकता है। और मेरे लिए तो जनता-जनार्दन ही ईश्वर का रूप है। और इसलिए मैंने इस सेवा कार्य को हमेशा एक साधना के रूप में ही देखा है। और ये साधना भी एकाकी नहीं रही है। ये एक सामूहिक यज्ञ है।

भारत की जनता का नीर-क्षीर विवेक हमेशा अद्भुत रहा है। देश की जनता ने राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर राजनीतिक स्थिरता का महत्व समझा है। ये जनता-जनार्दन की परिपक्वता ही है कि उसने मुझे लंबे समय तक जनता की सेवा का यह अवसर दिया। 2014 से पहले के कई दशक बहुत अस्थिरता और उथल-पुथल से भरे हुए थे। देश को बहुत नुकसान भी उठाना पड़ा। लेकिन अब देश की जनता एक स्थिर सरकार का काम भी देख रही

है और उसकी निर्णायक क्षमताओं की प्रशंसा भी है। मैं आज देश की महान जनता को भी नमन करता हूँ। जनता-जनार्दन का आभार व्यक्त करता हूँ।

देशवासियों की सहभागिता भी हमारी बहुत बड़ी शक्ति है। ये 12 वर्ष सरकार और समाज की सहभागिता का उत्सव मनाने वाले रहे हैं। बीते 12 वर्षों में मैंने जो भी सहयोग देश से मांगा, देशवासियों ने दिल खोलकर दिया है। मैंने स्वच्छता का आग्रह किया तो पूरा देश निकल पड़ा। मैंने देश से डिजिटल पेमेंट अपनाने का आह्वान किया तो भारत रियल टाइम ट्रांजैक्शन में दुनिया में सबसे आगे निकल गया। मैंने कोरोना महामारी के दौरान एकजुटता का संयम का आग्रह किया तो देश ने एकजुट होकर उस महामारी का सामना किया। जनता ने कभी हमें निराश नहीं किया।

आने वाले समय में भी इसी जन-विश्वास और जनभागीदारी के साथ हमें आगे बढ़ना है। सबका साथ, सबका विकास, सबका विश्वास और सबका प्रयास ये हमारा मंत्र रहा है। सबका प्रयास ही विकसित भारत के निर्माण की असली ऊर्जा है। हमें हर राज्य, हर शहर, हर गांव को जोड़ना है। अब समय आ गया है कि राज्यों के बीच नई प्रकार की तंदुरुस्त स्पर्धा, स्वस्थ स्पर्धा हो। स्पर्धा इस बात की हो कि कौन सा राज्य सबसे तेजी से ट्रिलियन डॉलर इकोनॉमी बनता है। स्पर्धा इस बात की हो कि कौन सा शहर इनोवेशन का सबसे बड़ा केंद्र बनता है। स्पर्धा इस बात की हो कि कौन सा क्षेत्र रोजगार सृजन में सबसे आगे निकलता है। भारत की प्रगति राज्यों की ऐसी प्रगति से ही होने वाली है।

आइए, अगले दशक को उपलब्धियों के साथ-साथ, श्रेष्ठता का भी दशक बनाएं। आइए, राजनीति की स्पर्धा से ऊपर उठकर विकास की स्पर्धा को राष्ट्रीय संस्कार बनाएं। देशवासियों के सपनों को हमारे संकल्प बनाएं।

स्रोत: एनडीए सम्मेलन में दिए गए भाषण के अंश, 10 जून 2026



Remarks of the
BJP President
Shri Nitin Nabin

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संकल्प से सिद्धि के 12 गौरवशाली वर्ष!

26 मई 2014 को शुरू हुआ यह कालखंड केवल शासन परिवर्तन नहीं, बल्कि आदरणीय प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी जी के यशस्वी नेतृत्व में राष्ट्र के खोए हुए आत्मविश्वास और सांस्कृतिक पुनर्जागरण का ऐतिहासिक क्षण है।

'सबका साथ, सबका विकास, सबका विश्वास और सबका प्रयास' के मूलमंत्र तथा 'अंत्योदय' के परम सिद्धांत को ध्येय मानकर सरकार ने नीतियों को केवल कागज़ों तक सीमित न रखकर जन-जन के जीवन को बदलने का माध्यम बनाया है। जहाँ एक ओर जनधन, DBT और डिजिटल क्रांति से अंतिम छोर पर बैठे गरीब का सशक्तिकरण हुआ, वहीं "विकास भी, विरासत भी" के संकल्प से आधुनिक इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर के साथ देश के सांस्कृतिक गौरव का पुनरुद्धार हुआ है। आज का सुरक्षित और सक्षम भारत आतंकवाद पर कड़े प्रहार और सेना के बढ़ते शौर्य के साथ अपनी संप्रभुता की रक्षा के लिए पूरी तरह मुस्तैद है।

सुशासन और राष्ट्र-प्रथम की यही 12 वर्षों की यात्रा आज "विकसित भारत @ 2047" के महासंकल्प की सबसे मजबूत आधारशिला है।

Source: Post on X

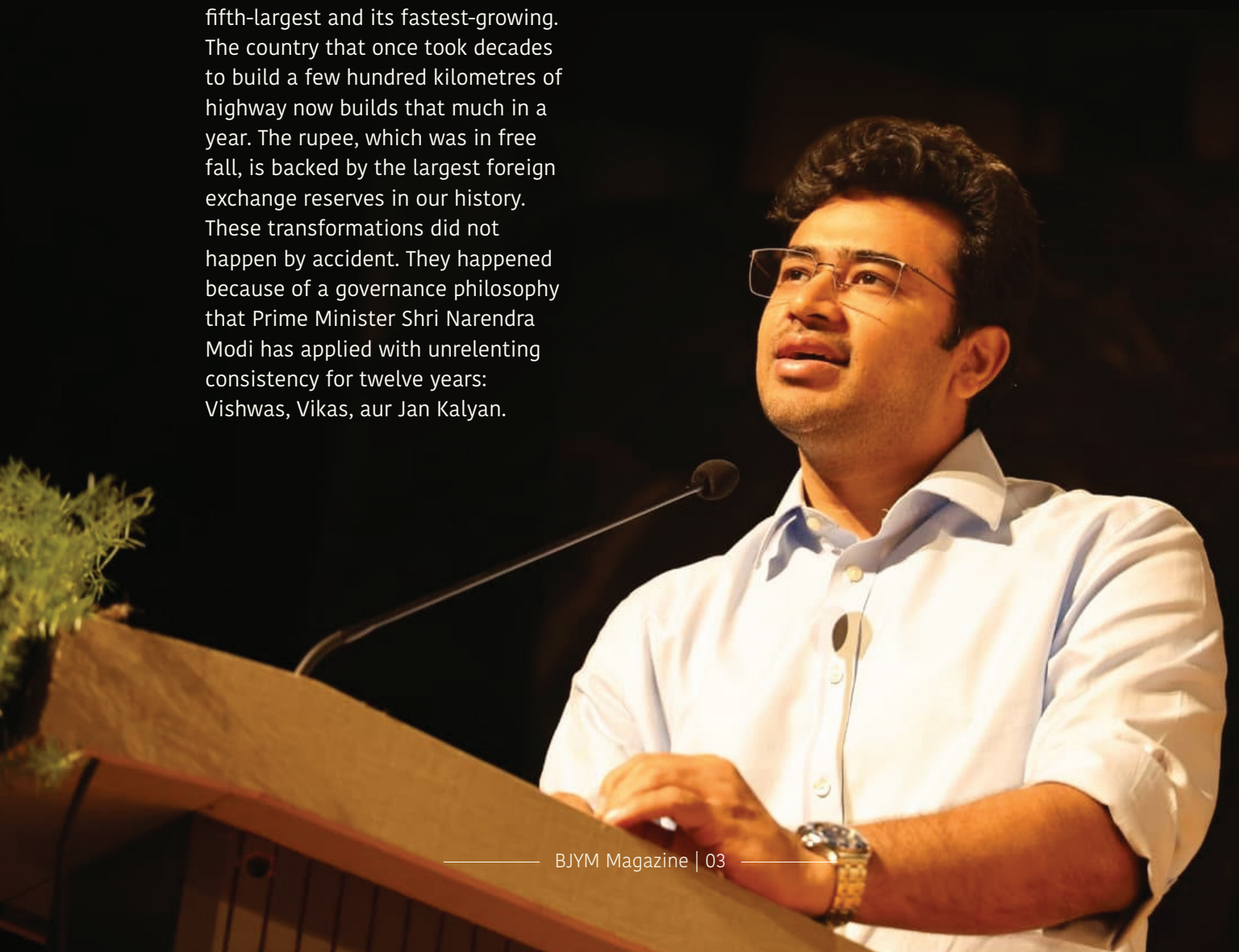


Every great civilisation has moments that separate what it was from what it became. For India, May 2014 was such a moment, not because power changed hands, as it had many times before, but because something deeper shifted. A nation that had grown accustomed to governance as the management of scarcity, to leadership as the art of excuses, to ambition as the privilege of the few, was asked to imagine itself differently. And it did.

Twelve years on, the India of 2026 is not a continuation of India of 2013. It is a departure from it. The economy that international analysts had placed among the "Fragile Five" as vulnerable, slow, and structurally unreliable is today the world's fifth-largest and its fastest-growing. The country that once took decades to build a few hundred kilometres of highway now builds that much in a year. The rupee, which was in free fall, is backed by the largest foreign exchange reserves in our history. These transformations did not happen by accident. They happened because of a governance philosophy that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has applied with unrelenting consistency for twelve years: Vishwas, Vikas, aur Jan Kalyan.

Message from the BJYM National President Shri Tejasvi Surya

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This edition brings together the voices of scholars, researchers, activists, entrepreneurs, and public servants from across India, each examining a different dimension of the transformation that has reshaped this nation. Together, they make a case that is as evidence-driven as it is deeply felt.

What strikes me most about the past twelve years is not any single policy achievement, remarkable as many of them are, but the shift in the relationship between the Indian state and the Indian citizen. When ₹44 lakh crore reaches beneficiaries directly through Jan Dhan accounts, bypassing every layer of leakage and corruption, that is not merely administrative reform; it is a restoration of trust. When over 10 crore households receive clean cooking gas under Ujjwala, that is not merely an energy intervention; it is dignity delivered. When the Aspirational Districts Programme reaches 112 of our most neglected districts with targeted, accountable governance, that is not merely a welfare scheme; it is the state finally keeping its oldest promise to its most forgotten citizens.

This is what Antyodaya looks like in the twenty-first century: not charity extended from above, but capability built from within. The governance model that has emerged over the past twelve years understands that national development is not a trickle that flows from cities to villages, from the rich to the poor, from the powerful to the marginalised. It is a force that must be ignited simultaneously, everywhere, by removing the barriers that prevented ordinary Indians from participating in the life of their own country.

As BJYM President, I have had the privilege of witnessing this transformation through the eyes of India's youth, the generation born into one India and coming of age in another. I have met young engineers in Tier-3 towns building startups. I have spoken with women in Self-Help Groups in rural Uttar Pradesh who have gone from subsistence to surplus in less than a decade. I have seen the fighter pilots and scientists and diplomats and entrepreneurs who have emerged from a generation told, for the first time, that their ambition and their nation's ambition are the same thing. That is the most powerful legacy of these

twelve years: not a statistic, but a generation that no longer asks for permission to dream.

India's journey to Viksit Bharat 2047 will be built on the foundation these twelve years have laid. But the foundation alone is not the building. The work ahead demands as much urgency, as much courage, and as much institutional honesty as what has come before. The contributors to this edition understand that. The best of their writing does not merely celebrate what has been achieved. It maps what remains to be done and holds both truths together with the integrity they deserve.

When Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya spoke of Antyodaya, he was not describing a welfare category. He was describing a moral commitment, the conviction that no nation can call itself developed while its last citizen remains left behind. Prime Minister Modi has made that commitment operational. It is now the responsibility of our generation of every young Indian reading these pages to carry it forward.

Vande Mataram!

Tejasvi Surya

MP Lok Sabha,
Bengaluru South



There are numbers that inform, and there are numbers that astonish. India's GDP has more than doubled in a decade, from \$2.1 trillion in 2015 to over \$4 trillion today. The country that Morgan Stanley once grouped among the "Fragile Five" economies most vulnerable to capital flight and currency collapse is now the world's fifth-largest economy and the fastest-growing major one. Highway construction that once crawled at 11 kilometres per day now exceeds 34 kilometres per day. Over 55 crore bank accounts have been opened, bringing hundreds of millions of Indians into the formal economy for the first time. Monthly UPI transactions have crossed 18 billion, embedding an Indian technological standard into the financial architecture of countries from Singapore to France. These are not routine development statistics. They are the arithmetic of a country that has fundamentally renegotiated its relationship with its own potential.

This edition of the magazine marks twelve years of that renegotiation. It is dedicated to the period between May 2014 and today, a period that we believe will be studied by future historians not merely as a chapter of economic growth but as a civilisational reset. The contributors to this edition come from every corner of India and every discipline of thought: geographers and political scientists, bankers and sociologists, youth leaders and doctoral scholars, journalists and public administrators.

The most important shift of the past twelve years was not in any single policy domain. It was in the underlying philosophy of governance itself. For much of the post-Independence era, the Indian state understood its role primarily as one of management: managing scarcity, managing deficits, managing expectations. Welfare was something distributed from above, often inefficiently, frequently corruptly. Rajiv Gandhi's candid admission that only fifteen paise of every rupee sent by the government reached the intended beneficiary was not an accusation levelled from outside the system. It was a confession from within it. The JAM Trinity — Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile — did not merely improve that ratio. It made the old model structurally obsolete. Over ₹44 lakh crore transferred directly to beneficiaries, without middlemen, without leakage, without delay. This was not incrementalism. It was a rewiring of the state's relationship with the citizen.

That rewiring is visible across every sector this edition examines. In banking, the Twin Balance Sheet crisis that had paralysed credit flow for years was confronted directly through Mission Indradhanush and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, restoring institutional health and creditor confidence. In energy, a country that began with 2.6 gigawatts of solar capacity now targets 500 gigawatts of non-fossil fuel energy by 2030, leading the world's most ambitious renewable transition at scale. In connectivity, the Aspirational Districts

Programme reached 112 of India's most neglected districts, replacing a one-size-fits-all development narrative with one responsive to local geographies, local deficits, and local dreams. In diplomacy, India secured the African Union's unanimous admission to the G20, hosted the world under the banner of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, and emerged as the indispensable voice of the Global South.

What several contributors rightly identify as the deeper current beneath these achievements is the recovery of civilisational confidence. For too long, India evaluated its own progress through borrowed frameworks and external benchmarks. The past twelve years have seen a different instinct take hold one that views India's ancient knowledge traditions, its spiritual heritage, its philosophical inheritance, not as antiquities to be preserved in museums, but as living sources of national self-understanding. The reconstruction of Kashi Vishwanath, the building of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, the recognition of Yoga as a global practice these are not separable from the economic story. They are part of the same assertion: that India's development is inseparable from India's identity.

Yet this edition does not offer a triumphalist account, nor should it. Regional disparities persist. The aspiration of Viksit Bharat 2047, a fully developed India by the centenary of independence, remains an ambition that demands far more than twelve years of effort to fulfil. What this edition affirms, above all, is that the direction has changed. India is no longer a country making peace with its limitations. It is a country actively dismantling them in its villages and boardrooms, laboratories and legislative chambers, borders and space programme. Viksit Bharat 2047 is not a promise made to the future. It is a responsibility inherited from the present.

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India is no longer a country making peace with its limitations. It is a country actively dismantling them in its villages and boardrooms, laboratories and legislative chambers, borders and space programme.

The Making of New India

Five Priorities That Defined a Decade

Devyani Rana

MLA Nagrota, Jammu &
Kashmir Legislative
Assembly

When Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi took the oath as India's 14th Prime Minister in May 2014, he arrived with a mandate that was as much emotional as it was electoral. Twelve years on, his three consecutive tenures have been defined by a constellation of interlocking priorities that together tell the story of a nation in transformation. Distil that story to its essence, and five Ms emerge: Mahila, Make in India, Mudra, MSMEs, and Mangalyaan. Each is a policy pillar. Together, they are a portrait of PM Modi's Modern India. The question is no longer whether India can transform, but how fast. The answer may lie in five simple letters.



Mahila: Putting Women at the Centre

Perhaps no shift under PM Modi has been as quietly consequential as the pivot toward women as primary beneficiaries of government policy. From the outset, schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao addressed the stubborn scourge of declining sex ratios and rising dropout rates among girls. The Ujjwala Yojana brought clean cooking gas to over 100 million households, liberating women from smoke-filled kitchens. PM Awas Yojana ensured that new homes were registered in the woman's name, a small legal detail with enormous social weight.

The Jan Dhan Yojana brought hundreds of millions of women into the formal banking system for the first time. Self-Help Groups, long a grassroots force, received renewed government backing, creating a network of rural women entrepreneurs. More recently, the push to reserve one-third of seats in Parliament and state legislatures for women marks a historic and generational commitment.

The armed forces, long an exclusively male domain, have also seen the winds of change. Women officers are today serving in permanent commission roles across the Army, Navy and Air Force. The Agniveer scheme, which opened short-term military service to young Indians, has for the first time brought women into combat support roles at scale, a quiet but historic shift in what it means to serve the nation.

Make in India: The Manufacturing Ambition

Launched in September 2014 with the image of a striding lion made of cogs, Make in India announced India's intention to become the world's factory. The ambition was clear: raise manufacturing's share of GDP, attract global supply chains, and create jobs at scale. The foundation being laid in manufacturing will be one that future governments build on for decades.

The most visible success has been in electronics. From virtually no mobile phone manufacturing in 2014, India is today the second largest producer in the world after China, with global technology majors assembling their flagship devices on Indian soil. The Production Linked Incentive scheme has

been the engine behind this shift, drawing international players across electronics, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and food processing to set up or expand in India.

The more consequential bet, however, is on semiconductors. The India Semiconductor Mission, backed by a ten-billion-dollar incentive package, has brought global chipmakers into fabrication and assembly on Indian soil. A decade ago, semiconductor manufacturing in India was considered a distant dream. Today it is a funded reality, positioning India to participate in one of the most strategically critical supply chains of the 21st century.

Defence manufacturing tells a similarly ambitious story. India, long the world's largest arms importer, has sharply increased indigenous production under the Atmanirbhar Bharat push. When Prime Minister Modi took office in 2014, India's defence exports stood at a modest 686 crore rupees. What followed was a transformation by any measure. By 2023-24, that figure had crossed 21,000 crore rupees, a thirty-fold jump in a decade. The next year saw it climb further to over 23,600 crore rupees, and by FY 2025-26, defence exports had surged to an all-time high of 38,424 crore rupees, a jump of over 62 per cent in a single year. From near irrelevance to supplying military equipment to over 80 countries, India's defence manufacturing story is perhaps the most dramatic arc within the Make in India mission.

Mudra: Credit for the Last Mile

India's informal economy has always been its beating heart. For generations, these entrepreneurs operated outside the formal credit system, at the mercy of often ruthless moneylenders who exploited vulnerable small business owners. The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, launched in 2015, changed that calculus.

By extending collateral-free loans of up to ten lakh rupees to non-corporate small businesses, Mudra brought over half a billion loan accounts into the formal fold over the following decade. Critically, a significant share of Mudra borrowers has been women and first-generation entrepreneurs from marginalised communities. Backing India's invisible

entrepreneurs, Mudra remains one of the most far-reaching financial inclusion efforts in the world.

MSMEs: The Backbone Gets a Budget

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises account for nearly half of India's exports and a third of its GDP. Yet for most of independent India's history, this sector was perpetually underfunded, over-regulated, and under-supported. Under PM Modi, MSMEs have moved from the margins to the mainstream of economic policy.

The redefinition of MSME classification in 2020 brought lakhs of additional enterprises under the policy umbrella. The Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme during COVID-19 injected critical liquidity into millions of small businesses at the moment they needed it most. The Government e-Marketplace opened public procurement to small vendors nationwide. MSME clusters in textiles, leather, ceramics, and food processing received targeted infrastructure and technology support. The logic is simple: if India is to generate the jobs its young population demands, it will be MSMEs, not just large corporations, that do the heavy lifting.

Mangalyaan: Reaching for the Stars

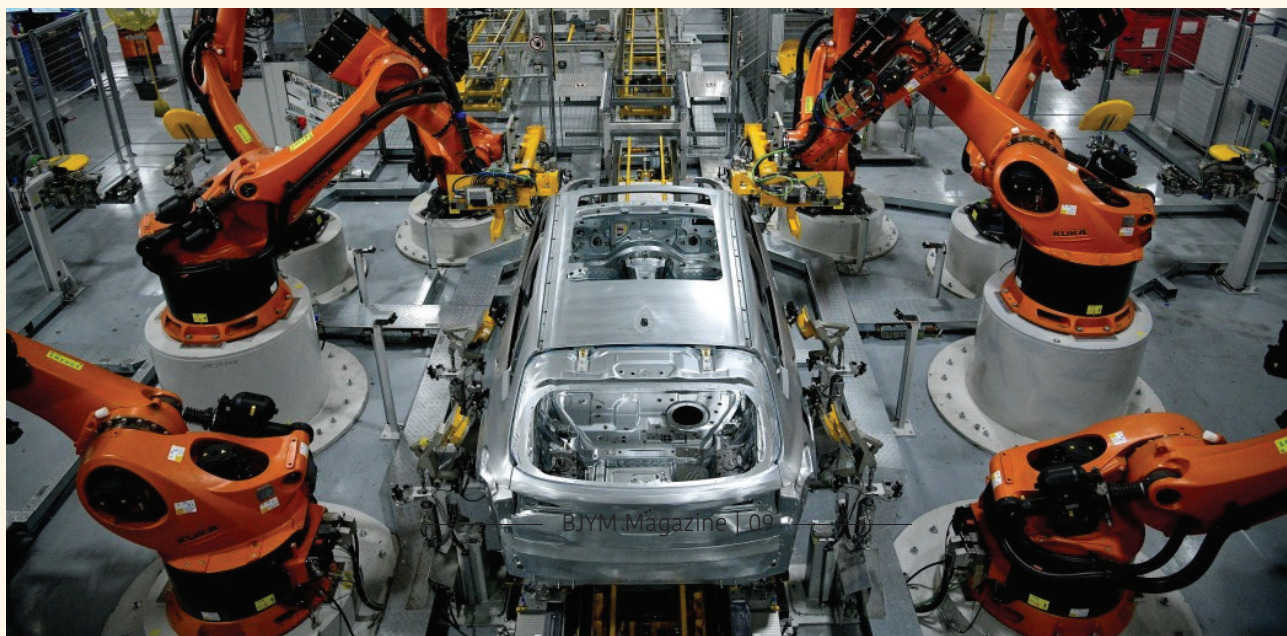
On 24 September 2014, just months into PM Modi's first term, India's Mars Orbiter Mission entered Martian orbit on its very first attempt, making India the first nation in history to achieve this feat. The image of ISRO scientists celebrating in sarees became iconic. It was more than a scientific milestone. It was a statement about what India was capable of.

In the years since, ISRO under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has compiled a record of remarkable firsts. Chandrayaan-3 landed near the lunar south pole in August 2023; a feat no other nation had achieved. The Gaganyaan mission is preparing to send Indian astronauts to space. Commercial launches, satellite constellations, and deep-space ambitions are no longer dreams but budgeted line items. From Mangalyaan to Mission Shakti, India's scientific and strategic ambitions have been given both budget and belief under PM Modi.

One Vision, Multiple Pillars

Mahila. Make in India. Mudra. MSMEs. Mangalyaan. These five Ms are not isolated programmes. They are threads in a single tapestry, one that weaves together social equity, economic ambition, entrepreneurial energy, and national pride. Twelve years on, India is more confident, more connected, and more cohesive than it was. The 5 Ms explain how it got here and point toward where it is headed next. For the young Indians who will inherit this nation, the 5 Ms are not just a report card of the past twelve years. They are a blueprint and an invitation. The work of building New India is far from finished, and it belongs to every one of us.

PM Modi's India is not just one story. It is a billion stories woven into the tapestry of Modern India. From Mudra to Mangalyaan, from Operation Sindoor to Digital India, you will find hundreds of schemes quietly yet boldly changing billions of lives. This is not a government that merely governs. It is a government that dares to reimagine India, proving that when vision meets will, India does not just keep pace with the world. India leads it.





Beyond Geopolitics

Global South and India's Development-First Diplomacy

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The term 'Global South' encompasses a diverse group of countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific that share common developmental aspirations and historical experiences. While these nations differ significantly in culture, geography, and political systems, many face similar challenges related to poverty reduction, infrastructure development, healthcare, education, climate change, and access to technology.

Historically, the concerns of developing countries have not always received adequate attention within global governance institutions. As a result, there has been growing demand for greater representation and a stronger voice in international decision-making.

India's position within this context is unique. As the world's largest democracy, a major emerging economy, and a nation that has itself navigated the complexities of development, India possesses both credibility and experience. Unlike many traditional donor countries, India engages with developing nations from a perspective shaped by similar historical and developmental challenges.

This shared experience has strengthened India's ability to build trust and partnerships across the Global South. Its leadership increasingly rests not on coercive power or economic dominance but on cooperation, mutual respect, and developmental solidarity. The growing prominence of India in international forums reflects the broader rise of the Global South as a significant force in world affairs.

Development Diplomacy: A Distinctive Foreign Policy Approach

Traditional diplomacy has often focused on security, trade, and geopolitical interests. While these dimensions remain important, India's contemporary foreign policy increasingly incorporates development as a central pillar of international engagement. Development diplomacy seeks to create partnerships based on shared growth rather than dependency. Instead of imposing models or conditions, it emphasises collaboration, capacity building, technology transfer, and institutional support.

India's development partnerships span a wide range of sectors including infrastructure, healthcare, education, agriculture, digital technology, renewable energy, and skill development. These initiatives are designed not merely to strengthen bilateral relations but also to contribute to long-term developmental outcomes.

The distinctive feature of India's approach lies in its emphasis on demand-driven cooperation. Partner countries identify their priorities, and India supports projects aligned with local needs and aspirations. This model has enhanced India's reputation as a trusted development partner across Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America.

Vaccine Maitri: Global Solidarity During a Pandemic

Few initiatives better illustrate India's development diplomacy than Vaccine Maitri. The COVID-19 pandemic presented an unprecedented challenge to global health systems and international cooperation. As wealthier nations secured large vaccine supplies, many developing countries struggled to obtain timely access.

Against this backdrop, India launched Vaccine Maitri, supplying vaccines to numerous countries worldwide. The initiative reflected both humanitarian considerations and India's longstanding commitment to international solidarity. For many nations, particularly in the Global South, Indian vaccine assistance arrived at a critical moment. It helped strengthen public health responses while reinforcing confidence in international cooperation.

The significance of Vaccine Maitri extends beyond the number of doses supplied. It demonstrated India's willingness to share its capabilities during a global crisis. It also highlighted the strength of India's pharmaceutical industry and its role as a major contributor to global healthcare. In many respects, Vaccine Maitri became a symbol of India's belief that global challenges require collective solutions.

Capacity Building and Human Resource Development

One of the most enduring dimensions of India's international engagement has been its commitment to capacity building. Infrastructure projects and financial assistance are important, but long-term development ultimately depends upon human capital. Recognizing this reality, India has invested extensively in training programmes, educational exchanges, technical cooperation initiatives, and professional development opportunities for partner countries.

Thousands of officials, professionals, engineers, healthcare workers, and administrators from developing nations have participated in Indian training programmes over the years. These initiatives contribute to institutional strengthening while fostering long-term people-to-people connections. The significance of capacity building lies in its sustainability. Skills and knowledge continue to generate benefits long after specific projects have been completed.

India's emphasis on human resource development reflects a broader philosophy that empowerment is more valuable than dependency. By helping partner countries strengthen their own capabilities, India

contributes to self-reliant and sustainable development.

Development Partnerships across Continents

India's development diplomacy is visible across multiple regions of the world. In Africa, India has supported projects related to agriculture, healthcare, education, power generation, and digital connectivity. The continent occupies a central place in India's foreign policy due to shared developmental experiences and growing economic opportunities.

In South Asia, development partnerships contribute to regional connectivity, energy cooperation, disaster management, and infrastructure development. India's neighbourhood engagement increasingly emphasises shared prosperity and regional integration. Across the Indo-Pacific, India has expanded cooperation in maritime security, sustainable development, climate resilience, and capacity building. Pacific Island nations have benefited from initiatives related to healthcare, climate adaptation, and digital infrastructure.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, India has strengthened cooperation in pharmaceuticals, information technology, renewable energy, and agriculture. These diverse partnerships demonstrate the global reach of India's development diplomacy and its commitment to fostering inclusive growth beyond its borders.

Digital Public Goods Diplomacy

One of India's most innovative contributions to international development has emerged from its experience with Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Over the past decade, India has developed digital platforms capable of delivering services at an unprecedented scale. Systems related to digital identity, financial inclusion, digital payments, and e-governance have transformed domestic public service delivery.

Increasingly, these experiences are attracting interest from developing countries seeking practical

solutions to governance challenges. India's approach differs from conventional technology exports. Rather than merely selling products, it seeks to share digital public goods and governance innovations that can be adapted to local contexts. Digital public goods diplomacy reflects a new form of international cooperation. It enables countries to improve service delivery, enhance financial inclusion, strengthen transparency, and expand citizen access to public services. For many nations of the Global South, India's digital experience offers an alternative model of technological development that emphasises inclusion, affordability, and public welfare.

G20 Presidency and the Voice of the Global South

India's G20 Presidency marked a significant moment in its international engagement. Rather than limiting discussions to the concerns of major economies, India consistently emphasised issues relevant to developing nations. Themes such as inclusive growth, digital transformation, climate finance, sustainable development, food security, and resilient supply chains received considerable attention.

A particularly notable initiative was India's effort to convene and amplify the perspectives of Global South countries. Through consultations and dialogues, India sought to ensure that the priorities of developing nations informed broader international discussions. This approach reflected India's belief that global governance must become more representative and responsive. The challenges faced by developing countries are not peripheral concerns; they are central to the future of the international system.

The G20 Presidency therefore reinforced India's image as both a bridge-builder and an advocate for greater inclusivity in global governance.

South-South Cooperation and Developmental Solidarity

India's development diplomacy is deeply rooted in the principle of South-South Cooperation. Unlike

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traditional aid relationships that often involve hierarchical structures, South-South Cooperation emphasises partnership among developing countries. It is based on mutual respect, shared experiences, and collaborative problem-solving.

India has consistently supported this approach through technical cooperation, educational exchanges, infrastructure development, and knowledge sharing. The significance of South-South Cooperation lies in its recognition that developing countries possess valuable experiences and innovations of their own. Solutions need not always flow from North to South; they can also emerge through collaboration among countries facing similar challenges.

India's role in this process has strengthened its standing as a leader of the Global South while contributing to a more balanced and diversified architecture of international development.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

India's international engagement increasingly extends beyond long-term development projects to include rapid humanitarian assistance and disaster response. Natural disasters, conflicts, health emergencies, and humanitarian crises require timely action and international solidarity. Over the past decade, India has repeatedly demonstrated its capacity to provide assistance during such emergencies.

Whether through evacuation operations, disaster relief missions, medical assistance, food aid, or emergency supplies, India has sought to respond quickly to the needs of affected populations. These efforts reflect an important dimension of India's foreign policy philosophy: the belief that humanitarian responsibility transcends national boundaries.

Humanitarian assistance also strengthens trust and goodwill, reinforcing India's reputation as a reliable partner during times of crisis.

From Domestic Transformation to Global Credibility

A key reason for India's growing influence within the Global South is the credibility derived from its

own developmental experience. Countries are often more receptive to lessons from nations that have successfully addressed challenges similar to their own. India's achievements in digital governance, financial inclusion, healthcare delivery, renewable energy, infrastructure expansion, and poverty reduction provide practical examples rather than abstract theories.

The country's domestic transformation has therefore enhanced its international legitimacy. India speaks not only as an advocate of development but also as a practitioner. This credibility is particularly valuable in an era when many developing nations seek solutions that are affordable, scalable, and adaptable to local realities.

India's experience demonstrates that large-scale transformation is possible within a democratic framework, making its developmental journey especially relevant to many countries of the Global South.

Towards a More Equitable Global Order

The broader significance of India's development diplomacy lies in its contribution to the ongoing evolution of global governance. The world today faces complex challenges including climate change, food insecurity, public health emergencies, technological disruptions, and geopolitical instability. Addressing these issues requires greater international cooperation and more inclusive decision-making structures.

India's advocacy for the Global South reflects the belief that sustainable solutions must incorporate the perspectives and interests of developing nations. A more equitable global order requires not only economic growth but also greater representation, fairness, and developmental justice. By promoting development partnerships, capacity building, digital cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and South-South collaboration, India seeks to contribute to this broader objective.

The aspirational district programme (hereinafter ADP) was announced by Prime Minister Modi on 28th January 2018, setting 112 of India's poorest districts for an all-round development journey. Unlike past centrally driven schemes, ADP is anchored in Niti Aayog and framed as a mass movement of cooperative federalism. The underlying idea is development, explicitly driven by a bottom-up framework and attentive to local needs.

For much of the post-Independence era, India's development narrative was shaped by a typical paradox. The nation that declared itself the world's largest democracy consistently failed its most marginalised citizens, not for want of funds, but for want of vision, accountability and political will. Many districts in the 1980s BIMARU states and others in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and much of the North-eastern frontier remained in the grip of poverty, malnutrition, low institutional birth rates, high school dropout rates and left-wing extremism for generations. This cumulatively prevented millions of people from becoming part of the mainstream, and simultaneously, India suffered an elephantine loss of its untapped potential that would have taken India's glory to its destined place.

Governance at the Last Mile

The Aspirational Districts Revolution

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It is to this end that the Modi Government institutionalised the ADP to go beyond the state-led one-size-fits-all development narrative, address interstate, regional, sub-regional, and district-level causes of disparities, bring equitable regional development and set governance rolling to the doorstep of the lost Indians.

From Backward To Aspiration: Not Just an Euphemism

Before analysing ADP's functioning and impact, we need to understand the symbolic importance of a single word: Aspiration. Under successive governments since independence, these districts, which have been unable to catch up with India's average growth, have not been developed and are called "backward". These were then subsequently used by earlier ruling parties to create a political structure in which the people of these districts were made beneficiaries, and the state was to be viewed through a paternalistic lens (the Mai-Baap concept) within the traditional patron-client relationship. The populace in these districts was effectively turned into dependents to win elections.

The conscious decision of the Modi government to brand these districts as aspirational instead of backward was an empowering move, aligning with its Motto of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas to ensure no one lags in India's growth. To call a particular district aspirational gives its citizens more self-respect and assertion while making them being looked upon positively by the administration. This is not just an English makeover of the Backwards Districts; rather, there is an institutional change in the program's design compared with the earlier Backwards Regions Grand Fund (BRGF) of the UPA times, which aimed to develop these districts. ADP is an effort towards positive reinforcement to destigmatise the backward districts with low development indices and nudge them towards a new life.

The Architectural Design of the ADP: Relying on three pillars

The ADP is based on three fundamentals, three Cs: **Competition** through a public platform, the Champions of Change Dashboard, where all the

aspirational districts are scored across 49 key performance indicators (KPIs) under five themes: Health and Nutrition; Education; Agriculture and Water Resources; Financial Inclusion & Skill Development; and Basic Infrastructure. The competition involves Delta Ranking, wherein a track is kept of gradual piecemeal progress, with the district showing the highest rate of progress over the previous month in the KPIs being applauded. This performance is further rewarded with additional funds for that district, creating a virtuous cycle and inspiring other districts' administrations to compete in the next round and score well.

Collaboration is institutionalised by assigning every aspirational district a Central coordinator officer (from the central govt. with the rank of joint or additional secretary) and a state coordinator Officer (from the state government with the rank of secretary). Both keep a watch over the performance of each aspirational district. To overlook this collaboration between the Central and State bureaucracies, there is an empowered committee of Secretaries of the Government of India, which also supervises and solves interministerial puzzles across the five themes of development under ADP. At times, for specific needs, assistance from private Corporations has also been sought, such as CSR funds and technical expertise from the Piramal Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Tata Trust.

Convergence refers to the better integration of ongoing central government schemes and programmes to magnify their impact. Thus, ADP is not built on a Fresh allotment of funds, but rather on increasing the efficiency of existing schemes to reach those who have historically been neglected and declared backwards, with no fault of theirs. The goal is to eliminate leakages, misallocations, and fabricated beneficiaries to streamline the targeting of beneficiaries and ensure clear checks on efficiency. Convergence fostered a move away from the isolated, disconnected operations of different policies towards synchronised planning and cross-functional governance.

The three Cs of the ADP architecture make it notable for three major reasons: first, it introduces the logic

of a free market economy, like performance assessment, competitive profiling, market analysis, efficiency and transparency, result-driven incentives, etc., into the realm of public governance and administration. Thus, strengthening the state's developmental capacity. Second, it makes governance, which people usually consider non-business, more comprehensible and more accountable to citizens at the Grassroots level. Third, the ADP completely shift the focus of policy formulation to evidence-based government interventions. This is backed by data collected on the baseline status of the development parameters, following an intensive, real-time assessment across the five themes targeted in ADP. This baseline helps identify the underperforming sectors in a particular district for targeted interventions. In all these districts, the KPI, which was uniquely bringing them down, was first addressed to straighten it out, thus overcoming the one-size-fits-all policy. Some of the Results of such interventions from the thematic areas are as follows:

Agriculture

The Chandoli district administration's push to shift farmers from white to black rice stems from farmers' exclusive dependence on white rice, which results in a market glut that reduces their profit margins and leads to low incomes. This cumulatively dragged the district down on socio-economic development indicators, putting Chandauli in the ADP list. The cultivation of black rice, however, increased the per-hectare value by at least ₹100 per kg, as it is exported to many countries, including Australia, New Zealand, and West Asian countries. Black rice cultivation was replicated in the entire Chandoli district, with the district administration leveraging this by establishing Chandoli Kala Chawal Krishak Samiti. This economic spin in the agriculture sector propelled Chandoli to rank number one for many months in the Delta ranking of the champions of change dashboard.

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ADP is a result of leadership that believes not in charity but in empowerment, not in laid-back governance but in synchronized proactive one to streamline every wheel of the federal structure.

Health and nutrition

The Malaria Mukht Bastar Abhiyan started in 2019 to target the Bastar division, where 72% of malaria cases in the country were diagnosed. This tailor-made program slashed malaria cases by more than 70% in Bastar and the adjoining districts of Bijapur and Dantewada. The success of this hyper-local, customised campaign is bringing our nation closer to achieving Zero Indigenous Malaria Transmission by 2030.

Education

In Arunachal Pradesh's Namsai district, the Hamara Vidyalaya programme (HVP) was introduced by the district administration to address lagging School infrastructure, high dropout rates, teacher absenteeism, and low engagement among students, parents, and teachers. All of them led Namsai to rank amongst the lowest districts in the Performance Grading Index for Districts (PGI-D) and National Achievement Survey (NAS). With HVP came many interventions: a) Along the lines of the Centre and state coordinator for every aspirational district, the Namsai district administration appointed a School Coordinator (an officer from the district administration) to every single school in the district. This coordinator played an important role in fixing school-wide particular problems. b) On the lines of the Champions of Change dashboard, the Namsai district administration developed its own online platform for real-time, data-driven tracking of teachers' and students' attendance, their ratio, students' enrolment and evaluation results. Finally, it ranked the schools in the entire district based on their performances. These interventions resulted in Namsai achieving the 1st rank in NITI Aayog's Delta ranking for many months.

The scale of human impact of such tailored interventions is huge with Prime Minister Modi recently stating, "ADP positively impacted over 28 crore people across 112 district, to contextualise this figure, It is approximately the combined

population of Germany, UK, France and Italy and that the program has demonstrably reached this scale within few years of launch without creating a parallel bureaucracy or a new fund, is a testament to the power of governance led development over the earlier governments' weak-willed misrouted funds' led development".

A 2021 UNDP appraisal of the ADP found that aspirational districts outperformed comparable non-aspirational districts across key development indicators by statistically significant margins. UNDP also confirmed that ADP is closely aligned with the "Leaving No One Behind" Motto of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with many of its KPIs and five themes advancing the SDGs in a targeted way.

The President of Singapore, Tharman Shanmugam, also praised the ADP as a program worthy of worldwide emulation to empower lagging areas or communities to join the mainstream and strengthen local area development. He mentioned that ADP is working towards social and economic inclusion, developing the indigenous community with an emphasis on economic resilience, and identifying beneficiaries of government programmes through a targeted approach. All this will reap great dividends for India in the coming times.

Deeper Ideology Behind ADP: Integral Humanism and Sarvodaya

ADP is a 21st-century concept programmed on a data-based framework to work towards achieving the goals inherent in the basic philosophy of the shapers of modern India: Deen Dayal Upadhyay's idea of Integral Humanism & Antyodaya, and the Gandhian idea of Swaraj and Sarvodaya, where they both mentioned that the best governance is that which works to reach the citizens on the margins, the last one standing in the Queue. They both believed that our nation needs to work towards developing an indigenous model of prosperity that suits local demand, utilising the natural talents and skills people excel at effortlessly, rather than imposing the futile and already exhausted models of Western Capitalism and Eastern Communism.

Both Deen Dayal Upadhyaya and Gandhi are against the uncritical use of the Western methodology of aggregating the entire populace and summing them up using lopsided development parameters like GDP and GDP per capita. They are deceptive in that the real misery and starvation are blanketed by small islands of development in a vast ocean, created by decades of undiversified, monolithic planning.

Aftermath of the success of ADP: Aspirational Blocks Programme

Upon seeing the success of the ADP program, Niti Aayog, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, launched the Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP) in 2023, aiming for a context-specific development approach to bring out the 513 blocks, located across 329 districts, from deep slumber and catalyse the dormant potential lying unharnessed for decades.

Adding on to the ABP is the Niti Aayog's strategic developmental sprint for another two terms of three months each, Sampoonnata Abhiyan 1.0 (July-Sept. 2024) & 2.0 (Jan.-April 2026) to ensure saturation (100% Coverage) in certain identified, important indicator (eg., Percentage of bovine animal vaccinated; Percentage of government schools with working girls' toilet) across blocks and districts from the key performing indicators of ADP and ABP.

The ADP, subsequently the ABP, and the Sampoonnata Abhiyan, thus at the base, are a mirror, showcasing what governance under true leadership and the will to transform could do for the populace that has been declared backward. ADP is a result of leadership that believes not in charity but in empowerment, not in laid-back governance but in synchronized proactive one to streamline every wheel of the federal structure. It's a result of governance which believes in not just transferring the responsibility by just sanctioning the fund but with the intent of establishing a mechanism to track the progress, not leaving the backwards to their own but handholding them to realise their forgotten potential. The districts are no longer backwards. They are Aspirational. And that, precisely, is the point that PM Modi wanted to make.

Ramrajya Revisited

Welfare, Justice and the Viksit Bharat Vision

Alok Kumar Gaurav

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Central University of
Karnataka

The concept of Ramrajya holds a guiding pillar in the Indian Civilisational imagination. It is neither a religious nor a purely mythological idea. Ramrajya is an ideal system of governance based on justice, welfare, moral leadership, social harmony, accountability, and the welfare of all citizens. Ramrajya is also a concept frequently invoked in the Indian political tradition for good governance, in which leaders serve the people as their first priority, and the state is a tool for the people's benefit rather than their subjugation. The concept of Ram Rajya has been interpreted as a system of governance based upon moral leadership, social justice, economic prosperity and human dignity. In the Ramayana, Lord Rama is depicted as a benevolent and just leader who was dedicated to upholding righteousness and justice. Citizens were secure and prosperous, with equal access to justice. The state was responsive to the people's needs, and governance was duty-based.



In the past 12 years, the government, led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has made a point of espousing the ideals of Ramrajya based on Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, and Sabka Prayas. Though the situation in modern India is different from the ancient kingdoms, the government policies and initiatives could be seen as attempts to implement the ideals of Ramrajya in the modern governance system.

Development through Welfare-Centric Governance:

Welfare of every Individual is one of the main pillars of Ramrajya. Lord Rama's rule in the old state ensured that no citizen was neglected, and the state made efforts to keep all sections of society content. It is a similar aspiration captured in the Modi Government's focus on inclusive welfare. Efforts have been made to increase access to banking, healthcare, housing, drinking water, clean cooking fuel, and income support through various schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, Ujjwala Yojana, and PM-Kisan. There has been more emphasis on welfare reaching the last person in the queue, signifying the principle of Antyodaya, upliftment of the poorest of the poor.

Improved transparency and minimisation of leakages through the use of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanisms have helped ensure that government support reaches beneficiaries directly. The concept of inclusive development aligns with the spirit of welfare, which is the essence of Ramrajya.

Development through Transparent and Accountable Governance:

Trust between citizens and the state is essential to Ramrajya. Public trust in institutions and leaders is a prerequisite for effective governance. In the last 12 years, efforts have been driven to improve transparency, efficiency and accountability in public administration. Digital India is revolutionising

citizen-government interaction. Multiple visits to government offices can be replaced by online services. It has made governance easy, curbed discretion and enhanced service delivery through digital platforms.

The JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, Mobile), the MyGov platform, and CPGRAMS have laid the foundations for an integrated governance structure that ensures targeted welfare distribution and enhances accountability. With clear and digital systems, citizens have more contact with the State, which reinforces their trust in public institutions.

Development through infrastructure and economic empowerment:

Another important aspect of Ramrajya is economic prosperity. A just society must also be a flourishing society with opportunities for its citizens to better their lives. In the last 12 years, India has seen a tremendous investment in infrastructure. Highways, expressways, railways, airports, ports, and digital connectivity networks have grown rapidly. Bharatmala, Sagarmala, Gati Shakti, and Dedicated Freight Corridors have sought to lay the foundation for future economic development.

The government has also been encouraging entrepreneurship through various initiatives like Startup India, Stand-Up India, Make in India, and Mudra Yojana. The purpose of these programmes is to provide opportunities for youth, foster innovation, and enhance India's economic self-reliance. The spirit of these activities mirrors Ramrajya's vision of a prosperous society, and the role of governance in helping the citizens achieve their potential.

Development through empowerment of women as a path towards social justice:

The Ramayana offers multiple instances of the dignity and respect to be accorded to women in the context of dharma. Modern Ramrajya emphasises the importance of gender justice and the empowerment of women as integral parts of a

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The Ramrajya, which is not to be repeated literally, is an ethical and governance standard which continues to inspire India.

perfect society.

The Modi Government has taken a number of initiatives for improving the lives of women. Education, health, financial security, and dignity have been the focus of various schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, etc., and the expansion of maternity benefits. Women's involvement in governance and economic activities has also been enhanced through local governance institutions, self-help groups and entrepreneurship programmes. These efforts help to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

National Security and the Protection of Dharma:

The Ramayana portrays Lord Rama as not only a compassionate King but also a defender of the people against injustice and threats. Security and justice, therefore, form an essential part of Ramrajya. India has been more assertive regarding national security over the past decade and a half. National preparedness has been enhanced through investment in defence modernisation, infrastructure, indigenous defence production, and counter-terrorism capabilities, exemplified by recent Op Sindoor and surgical strikes.

The focus on self-reliance in defence, as part of the concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat, underscores the broader principle of safeguarding sovereignty and promoting indigenous innovation and industry. The development, success, and social peace of a country depend on a secure country.

Cultural Renaissance and Civilisational Confidence:

Ramrajya embodies deep Indian civilisational values. It is the symbol of a society that values its heritage and adapts to the changing times. In the last decade, there has been a renewed focus on promoting India's culture, religion and history. The revival of pilgrimage centres such as Kashi Vishwanath, the restoration of Dwarka and Mathura, and the construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, along with the promotion of Indian languages and the preservation of India's cultural heritage, have all contributed to this cultural revival. The activities aim to build citizens'

confidence in civilisational values and to re-establish their link with India's rich cultural heritage.

Towards Viksit Bharat 2047:

It is a vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the next developmental milestone for India. The goal is not just economic development, but a prosperous, inclusive, innovative and world-class country. This vision reflects the long-term principles of Ramrajya in many ways. To have a developed India with prosperity for all citizens, to make it an accountable governance, to have opportunities available to all and to have a national development that is guided by ethics.

The Modi Government's focus on technology, infrastructure, welfare, sustainability, innovation, and citizen participation is an attempt to create a contemporary framework with an archetypal approach to civilisational values.

The Ramrajya, which is not to be repeated literally, is an ethical and governance standard which continues to inspire India. Its fundamental values, such as justice, welfare, transparency, prosperity, security, and moral leadership, remain applicable in the 21st century.

The Modi Government has tried to bring these ideals to day-to-day policy and governance in India over the past 12 years. The government has sought to strengthen a model of governance based on trust, development, and public welfare in the following areas: welfare delivery, digital transformation, infrastructure development, women's empowerment, national security, and cultural rejuvenation. In the journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047, the vision of Ramrajya remains a guiding light, emphasising that economic growth is not the only measure of development; it is equally vital to build a society that is just, compassionate, and inclusive, where every citizen is treated with dignity and respect.

Transparency, Trust and the JAM Trinity Governance for Middle-Class

Yash Gupta
Social Activist

The middle class has always been the backbone of India. It pays taxes honestly, works hard to educate its children, supports businesses, creates employment, and contributes significantly to the nation's economy. Yet for many years, this hardworking section often felt ignored. While governments spoke about development, ordinary families continued to struggle with corruption, poor infrastructure, rising expenses, and inefficient public services.

The rise of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in 2014 brought a new model of governance that directly connected with the aspirations of India's middle class. The historic mandates received by the Modi Government in 2014, 2019, and again in 2024 are not merely electoral victories; they are a reflection of the trust built over twelve years through visible governance, improved public services, opportunities, and a vision for a developed India.



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One of the biggest reasons behind this trust is the government's commitment to transparency. Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi once admitted that out of every one rupee sent by the government, only fifteen paise reached the actual beneficiary. This statement highlighted the deep-rooted leakages and corruption within the system. For decades, this problem remained unresolved.

The Modi Government addressed this challenge through the JAM Trinity—Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile. By linking bank accounts, identity verification, and digital connectivity, welfare benefits began reaching beneficiaries directly through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). This reduced corruption, eliminated middlemen, and ensured better utilisation of public money. For the middle-class taxpayer, this was an important reform because it strengthened confidence that tax revenues were being used honestly and effectively. The government's welfare initiatives also reduced financial pressures on millions of families. Ayushman Bharat expanded healthcare access to

vulnerable sections of society, while Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendras made quality medicines available at affordable prices. Swachh Bharat Mission improved sanitation and public health across the country, creating cleaner surroundings and better living conditions. The Ujjwala Yojana provided LPG connections to poor households, helping millions of women transition from traditional cooking fuels. While these schemes primarily targeted weaker sections, they also contributed to a healthier, cleaner, and more productive society, benefiting the nation as a whole. Startup India encouraged innovation and entrepreneurship among young Indians. The results have been remarkable. When the Startup India initiative was launched in 2016, India had only a few hundred recognised startups. Today, India has more

.....
*India's middle class
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greatest
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and invests in the
nation's future.*
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than 2 lakh DPIIT-recognized startups, making it one of the largest startup ecosystems in the world. These startups have generated lakhs of direct and indirect employment opportunities while encouraging innovation across sectors ranging from fintech and health-tech to manufacturing and agriculture. This growth has created new opportunities for the middle class, especially for young professionals who now see entrepreneurship as a viable

career option.

The government also extended support to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which are among the largest employers in the country. Credit support, policy reforms, incentives, and easier access to finance helped many small businesses expand and generate employment. For the middle class, stronger businesses mean more jobs, better incomes, and greater economic stability. MSMEs contribute nearly one-third of India's GDP and employ millions of people across the country. Over the last decade, government initiatives such as easier access to credit, collateral-free loans, digital registration, and various support schemes have helped small businesses formalise and expand. Since the middle class constitutes a large share of

India's entrepreneurs, traders, professionals, and small business owners, strengthening the MSME sector has directly supported middle-class economic growth and employment generation.

Infrastructure development has perhaps been the most visible transformation witnessed over the last twelve years. India's national highway network has expanded significantly, reaching more than 1.46 lakh kilometres. Highway construction has accelerated considerably, with India constructing over 12,000 kilometres of highways in FY 2024 alone. Projects such as Bharatmala and Sagarmala have improved logistics, reduced travel time, and strengthened connectivity across the country. The length of multi-lane national highways has also increased substantially compared to 2014. For middle-class families, this means faster travel, better connectivity, improved business opportunities, and a better quality of life.

Infrastructure development has perhaps been the most visible transformation witnessed over the last twelve years. In 2014, India's National Highway network stood at approximately 91,287 kilometres. Today, it has expanded to more than 1.46 lakh kilometres, representing a growth of nearly 60 percent in a decade. The pace of highway construction has also accelerated significantly, with India constructing over 12,000 kilometres of highways in FY 2024 alone. National High-Speed Corridors and expressways, which were only about 93 kilometres in 2014, have expanded to nearly 2,500 kilometres by 2024, reflecting a massive improvement in modern transport infrastructure. Projects such as Bharatmala and Sagarmala have strengthened road, port, and logistics connectivity across the country. For middle-class families, this means shorter travel times, lower transportation costs, better business opportunities, increased investment, and an improved quality of life. For the first time, infrastructure development has become a visible part of everyday life rather than just a government promise.

Air connectivity has also witnessed significant growth. The number of operational airports in India has nearly doubled over the last decade, improving connectivity between major cities and smaller

towns. Through the UDAN scheme, air travel has become more accessible for ordinary citizens, something that was once considered a luxury by many middle-class families.

The trust that India's middle class has shown in the Modi Government is not based on promises alone. It is rooted in visible improvements in governance, infrastructure, transparency, digital services, and economic opportunities. Over the last twelve years, the middle class has witnessed a government that understands its aspirations and continuously works towards fulfilling them.

India's middle class often carries the greatest responsibility. It pays taxes, drives consumption, creates businesses, supports innovation, and invests in the nation's future. The trust that this section of society has placed in Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the last twelve years has become one of the strongest pillars of political stability in India. This trust was earned through visible governance, transparency, infrastructure development, economic opportunities, and efficient delivery of public services.

It is this trust of India's hardworking middle class that has enabled the government to stand firm both at home and abroad. A government that enjoys the confidence of its people can represent the nation with greater strength on the global stage. India's successful G20 Presidency, its emergence as the voice of the Global South, and its assistance to countries during challenging times such as the COVID-19 pandemic have strengthened India's international reputation. The journey began with winning the trust of India's citizens, and today that trust has empowered India to emerge as a confident, respected, and responsible global leader.

From Welfare State to Empowerment State

Reimagining Development in New India

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The distinction between welfare and empowerment is important. Welfare seeks to protect individuals from deprivation through public support and social security measures. Empowerment, by contrast, seeks to enhance individuals' capacity to make choices, access opportunities, and improve their own livelihoods. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, a modern developmental state requires both. However, the relative emphasis placed on each can significantly influence policy design and governance priorities.

The developmental philosophy that has emerged over the last decade reflects an attempt to combine social protection with economic agency. The focus has increasingly shifted towards ensuring that welfare schemes serve as stepping stones to self-sufficiency rather than permanent destinations. This approach is visible across multiple sectors, from banking and entrepreneurship to women's empowerment, skill development, and digital governance.

Financial Inclusion: The Jan Dhan Revolution

Perhaps the most visible example of this transformation is the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. Prior to 2014, millions of Indians remained outside the formal banking system. Financial exclusion limited access to savings, credit, insurance, pensions, and government benefits. The Jan Dhan initiative sought to address this challenge by providing every household with access to a bank account. What initially appeared as a financial inclusion programme gradually evolved into a broader instrument for social and economic empowerment.



For millions of citizens, especially women, rural households, and low-income families, access to banking became a gateway to participation in the formal economy. Savings habits improved, government benefits became more accessible, and dependence on informal financial intermediaries reduced. More importantly, Jan Dhan accounts became the foundation on which a broader architecture of empowerment was built, linking citizens to digital payments, insurance schemes, pension programmes, and entrepreneurial opportunities. The significance of the initiative lies not merely in opening accounts but in integrating previously excluded populations into the country's financial ecosystem.

Direct Benefit Transfers and the Transformation of Welfare Delivery

Traditional welfare systems often faced challenges related to leakages, delays, duplication, and administrative inefficiencies. Citizens frequently depend upon intermediaries to access benefits intended for them. The expansion of Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), supported by the JAM trinity- Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile connectivity- introduced a new model of welfare delivery.

Under this framework, benefits are transferred directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts, reducing opportunities for corruption and improving transparency. Equally important, the beneficiary is no longer a passive recipient navigating multiple administrative layers. Instead, the individual becomes a direct participant in a digitally enabled governance system.

This transformation represents more than administrative reform. It reflects a broader shift towards dignity, accountability, and citizen-centric governance. The objective is not merely to distribute resources but to ensure that citizens have greater control over the benefits meant for them.

Skill India and the Creation of Human Capital

Economic empowerment depends not only on access to financial resources but also on the development of human capabilities. In a rapidly changing global economy, skills increasingly determine employability, productivity, and social

mobility. Recognising this reality, the Skill India Mission sought to place skill development at the centre of the development agenda. The initiative acknowledged a critical challenge facing India: a young population can become a demographic dividend only if it possesses the skills required by contemporary industries and services.

Skill development programmes have sought to bridge the gap between education and employment, enhance workforce readiness, and create pathways for entrepreneurship. The broader significance of the initiative lies in its underlying philosophy. Development is not viewed merely as income support but as an expansion of capabilities. A skilled individual possesses greater economic freedom, greater adaptability, and greater opportunities for advancement. In this sense, skill development becomes a key instrument of empowerment.

Entrepreneurship as a Development Strategy

For decades, economic policy largely focused on employment generation through government programmes and large-scale industries. While these remain important, contemporary development increasingly recognises entrepreneurship as a powerful driver of growth and inclusion. The government's approach over the past decade has sought to democratize entrepreneurship by expanding access to credit, simplifying procedures, and encouraging innovation.

The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana is a notable example. By extending collateral-free loans to small entrepreneurs, the programme has enabled millions to establish or expand micro-enterprises. For many beneficiaries, particularly women, youth, and first-generation entrepreneurs, access to formal credit represented a significant departure from earlier constraints. Small businesses, local enterprises, service providers, and self-employed individuals gained opportunities to participate more actively in economic growth.

The importance of such initiatives lies in the recognition that entrepreneurship is not limited to large corporations or urban elites. Economic transformation often begins with small enterprises

that create livelihoods, generate local employment, and strengthen community resilience.

PM SVANidhi: Dignity and Livelihood Support

The PM Street Vendor's Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) programme illustrates the empowerment-oriented approach to welfare. Street vendors form an important component of India's informal economy. Despite their economic contribution, they often face limited access to institutional credit and financial services. Rather than viewing vendors solely as recipients of assistance, the programme recognises them as entrepreneurs. By providing working capital loans, encouraging digital transactions, and facilitating financial inclusion, it seeks to strengthen their economic agency.

The programme reflects a broader shift in developmental thinking. Individuals are not defined by vulnerability alone; they are also recognised for their productive capacities and entrepreneurial potential. Such an approach helps transform welfare from a mechanism of support into a platform for livelihood enhancement.

Self-Help Groups and Women's Economic Agency

One of the most significant dimensions of India's empowerment journey has been the growing role of women in economic and social development. Self-Help Groups (SHGs), supported through various government initiatives, have emerged as powerful instruments of collective empowerment. By promoting savings, access to credit, entrepreneurship, and community leadership, SHGs have strengthened women's participation in local economies.

The impact extends beyond income generation. Participation in economic activities often enhances decision-making capacity, social confidence, and community engagement. The increasing emphasis on women-led development reflects a broader understanding that sustainable development requires the active participation of half the population. Empowerment, therefore, is not merely an economic objective but also a social transformation.

From Subsidy Culture to Opportunity Creation

The transition from welfare to empowerment does not imply the abandonment of social support. Welfare remains essential for vulnerable populations, especially in areas such as food security, health care, housing, and social protection. However, the developmental discourse increasingly emphasizes opportunity creation alongside welfare provision.

The objective is to ensure that public interventions generate long-term capabilities. Financial inclusion creates access to credit. Skill development improves employability. Entrepreneurship programmes support income generation. Digital governance enhances accessibility. Women's collectives strengthen economic participation. Together, these initiatives seek to create pathways through which citizens can improve their own circumstances. In this framework, welfare is not viewed as an end in itself but as part of a broader strategy for empowerment.

Towards an Empowerment-Oriented Development State

The emerging model of governance suggests that development is most effective when citizens are treated not merely as beneficiaries but as partners in national progress. The state's role remains important, but it increasingly focuses on enabling rather than controlling. Public policy seeks to expand access to opportunities, reduce structural barriers, and provide the institutional support necessary for individual advancement.

This approach aligns with the broader vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, which emphasises self-confidence, capability, and participation. The transformation is not simply economic. It reflects a changing relationship between the citizens and the state. The citizen is increasingly viewed as an entrepreneur, innovator, worker, producer, and stakeholder in development. Such a perspective encourages active participation rather than passive dependence.

A Change of Era

Governance, Growth & India's Civilisational Renewal

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In the summer of 2013, India carried the weight of a decade marked by policy paralysis, rampant corruption and an economy limping at what economists grimly termed the "Hindu rate of growth" in its modern avatar. Scams had normalised the plunder of public wealth. The rupee was in free fall and global financial analysts at Morgan Stanley had placed India among the so-called "Fragile Five": a label of shame grouping it alongside Turkey, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia as economies most vulnerable to capital flight and currency collapse. Citizens had grown accustomed to a state that was present on paper but absent in practice. Into this moment of deep national fatigue stepped a leader who promised not merely a change of government, but a change of era.



Twelve years later, India stands as one of the world's leading economies: its GDP has more than doubled from \$2.1 trillion in 2015 to \$4.15 trillion in 2026, growing at 105% over the decade even as the United States grew 66% and China 44% during the same period, as noted by the International Monetary Fund. The IMF has consistently identified India as the world's fastest-growing major economy, projecting 6.4% growth through 2026 even as global headwinds weigh on the broader global economy. This is not an accident of circumstance. It is the arithmetic of ambition, reform and relentless governance.

Steel Roads and Digital Veins: Building the Infrastructure of Aspiration

For a civilisation as ancient as India's, the aspiration for modern infrastructure was long overdue. The Modi government chose to make it a signature of statecraft. In 2014, India had 91,287 kilometres of national highways. Today, that network stretches to over 1,46,560 kilometres, a 61% expansion in twelve years. More tellingly, the pace of highway construction rose from a sluggish 11.6 km per day in 2013-14 to 34 km per day in 2025, as documented by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in its official records submitted to Parliament. High-speed corridor: a concept almost nonexistent in 2014 at a mere 93 km, now spans over 3,052 km. The ministry's investment in road infrastructure grew by a factor of 6.4 between 2013-14 and 2024-25.

This is not the case for roads alone. The number of operational airports doubled from 74 in 2014 to 157 by September 2024, making air travel accessible to Tier-2 and Tier-3 India for perhaps the first time. Port capacity has doubled to 2,762 million metric tonnes per annum. Inland waterway cargo grew by 710%, from 18 million metric tonnes to 146 million metric tonnes. Over 45,000 route-kilometres of rail electrification have been completed since 2014. Vande Bharat trains redefined the grammar of rail travel and 3.74 lakh kilometres of rural roads were built under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana,

connecting previously isolated villages to markets, schools and hospitals.

The Digital Republic: From Cash to Code

Perhaps no transformation under the Modi government has been as profound or as globally consequential as the digital revolution engineered through the JAM trinity of Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile. In 2016, the launch of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) was an experiment. Today, it is nothing short of a civilisational export. As of June 2025, UPI processed 18.39 billion transactions in a single month, handling over ₹24.03 lakh crore in value. It now accounts for 85% of all digital transactions in India and, as recognised by the International Monetary Fund in June 2025, commands nearly 50% of the entire world's real-time payment transaction volume, thereby making it the largest real-time payments system on the planet. India did not merely adopt digital finance; it invented its standard.

The scale of financial inclusion underpinning this is equally staggering. Jan Dhan accounts brought hundreds of millions into formal banking for the first time.

Aadhaar, with over 144 crore numbers generated as of March 2026, became the world's largest biometric identity infrastructure. Together, they enabled direct benefit transfers (DBT) that bypassed decades of leakage and middlemen, placing welfare directly in citizens' hands. Further, India's startup ecosystem, energised by this digital foundation, grew from a mere 400 recognised entities in 2014 to over 1,57,000 DPIIT-recognised startups by December 2024, thus creating over 16.6 lakh direct jobs and producing over 100 unicorns, securing India's place as the world's third-largest startup ecosystem.

A Nation Defended, A Nation Secure

In 2014, India exported ₹686 crore worth of defence equipment. In 2024-25, that figure reached ₹23,622 crore: a 34-fold increase in a single decade, as recorded by the Ministry of Defence. The cumulative

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The next frontier of social welfare must expand beyond enrolment numbers to quality outcomes in health, education and skilling.
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defence exports between 2014-24 touched ₹88,319 crore, compared to just ₹4,312 crore in the entire preceding decade. Simultaneously, indigenous defence production reached an all-time high of ₹1.27 lakh crore in FY 2023-24, with over 92% of capital procurement contracts awarded to domestic firms. India now exports to over 80 countries, including advanced democracies such as the United States, France, and Armenia. The defence budget itself nearly tripled from ₹2.53 lakh crore in 2013-14 to ₹6.81 lakh crore in 2025-26.

These numbers tell the story of Atmanirbhar Bharat in its most strategic dimension. A nation that was once the world's largest arms importer is now an arms exporter of consequence, building its own fighter platforms, warships, artillery systems, and precision munitions. This is not merely industrial achievement; it is strategic sovereignty.

The Welfare State Reimagined: Dignity as Governance

If infrastructure represents the skeleton of a rising India, its welfare architecture represents its conscience. The Jal Jeevan Mission grew rural tap water connections from 3.23 crore households in 2019 to 15.84 crore by May 2026, freeing millions of women from hours of daily water collection and sharply reducing waterborne diseases in rural households. The Swachh Bharat Mission constructed over 12.11 crore toilets, raising rural sanitation coverage from 39% in 2014 to near-universal levels, thus keeping adolescent girls in school and restoring basic dignity to communities that had long been denied it. The PM Ujjwala Yojana delivered over 10.57 crore free LPG connections, replacing smoky hearths with clean cooking flames and measurably reducing chronic respiratory illness among rural women. Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest government-funded



health insurance programme, has issued over 43.93 crore health cards as of May 2026, providing ₹5 lakh per family annually for hospitalisation, severing the devastating link between a medical emergency and financial ruin for crores of households. PM Awas Yojana has built over 4 crore pucca houses with 2 crore more sanctioned through 2029, replacing the insecurity of temporary shelters with the permanence of a home. Over 80 crore households receive free foodgrains monthly under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana, ensuring that economic hardship does not translate into hunger.

Civilisation Reclaimed: The Cultural Renaissance

Numbers alone cannot contain the transformation of these twelve years. At its deepest, this has been a civilisational restoration: India that has stopped being apologetic about who it is. The consecration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22, 2024, fulfilled a centuries-long aspiration of a people and announced, quietly but unmistakably, that governance had finally aligned with civilisational memory. The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi, inaugurated in December 2021, reconnected the ancient Ganga ghats to the Vishwanath shrine, with devotee footfall rising from 69 lakh in 2019 to 13 crore by 2023. The Mahakaal Lok corridor in Ujjain, the revitalisation of Kedarnath, and the development of the Kamakhya Temple in Assam together represent a government that understands that civilisational dignity is not separate from development, but its highest expression. Tourism to Varanasi alone surpassed Goa's visitor numbers, generating local employment and restoring economic life to ancient cities.

Vishwaguru in the Making: India's Voice on the World Stage

In 2023, India assumed the G20 presidency under the theme of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: One Earth, One Family, One Future. Hosting over 200 events across every state and union territory, India transformed the G20 from a Western-dominated forum into a platform where the Global South finally had a seat at the head of the table. India successfully championed the African Union's

permanent membership in the G20, a moment of genuine diplomatic consequence. Through the Quad, the International Solar Alliance co-founded with France, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and BRICS, India practised what Prime Minister Modi described as multi-alignment: engaging every major power on its own terms, without subordinating Indian interests to any camp. In 2024, PM Modi became the first Indian recipient of Russia's Order of St. Andrew, while also receiving honours from Kuwait, Guyana, Dominica, and Nigeria, a measure of India's deepening global relationships spanning geography, ideology, and civilisation.

The Road to Viksit Bharat

To inherit twelve years of achievement is to accept the weight of an even larger promise. The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047: a fully developed India at the centenary of its independence demands that this momentum not merely be sustained but accelerated. India must raise its investment rate from 33.5% to 40% of GDP by 2035, as the World Bank has assessed is necessary to achieve high-income status. The manufacturing share of GDP must grow to absorb the demographic dividend of a young nation. The next frontier of social welfare must expand beyond enrolment numbers to quality outcomes in health, education and skilling. Digital infrastructure must reach the last-mile, so that no Indian remains outside the arc of the digital economy.

To be precise, twelve years ago, India was a nation waiting to exhale. Today, it inhales with purpose. The transformation from policy paralysis to the world's fastest-growing major economy; from a state haunted by scam after scam to one building the largest biometric identity system on earth; this is not a story of one government. It is the story of an awakened nation, choosing, at last, to become the Bharat it always was meant to be.

From Surya Mandir to Surya Ghar

How India Made Solar a Civilisational Mission

Smita

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Introduction

Since 2014, the Government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has pursued a development strategy that combines economic growth, environmental sustainability, technological innovation, and social welfare, while solar energy infrastructure occupies essential space in policymaking. India's relationship with the sun predates modern energy policy by centuries. Revered through traditions such as Surya Namaskar and embodied in architectural landmarks such as the Konark Sun Temple, the sun has long occupied a significant place in India's civilizational imagination. Over the past decade, this cultural legacy has taken on a modern expression through solar governance. The journey from Surya Mandir to Surya Ghar symbolises the convergence of heritage, technology, and development.



In 2014, India's solar capacity stood at approximately 2.6 GW. Today, India is among the world's leading renewable energy markets and has committed itself to achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2070. The growth of the solar sector reflects the broader philosophy of Vishwas, Vikas aur Jan Kalyan that has shaped governance during the past twelve years.

Solar Infrastructure and the Architecture of Development

One of the most important achievements of the Modi Government has been the creation of a robust solar infrastructure ecosystem. Policymakers recognised that renewable energy expansion required more than ambitious targets. It required institutions, transmission networks, financing mechanisms, and regulatory certainty that could attract large-scale investment. The Solar Parks and Ultra Mega Solar Power Projects Scheme became a cornerstone of this strategy. By facilitating land acquisition, transmission connectivity, and project clearances, the government reduced implementation risks and accelerated private participation. This approach enabled the rapid growth of utility-scale solar projects across the country.

As a result, India developed some of the world's largest solar parks, including Bhadla in Rajasthan, Pavagada in Karnataka, and Rewa in Madhya Pradesh. These projects demonstrate how strategic public intervention can catalyse large-scale private investment while advancing national renewable energy goals.

Equally significant has been the Green Energy Corridor initiative. Renewable energy generation is concentrated in regions with high solar potential, whereas major demand centres are often located elsewhere. Dedicated transmission infrastructure has therefore become essential for integrating renewable energy into the national grid. Through investments in transmission networks, India has

improved grid stability and strengthened its capacity to evacuate power from solar-rich regions. Solar Infrastructure as an Instrument of Jan Kalyan India's solar transformation extends beyond infrastructure creation. A defining feature of the past twelve years has been the effort to ensure that the benefits of renewable energy reach citizens directly. The PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, launched in 2024, aims to solarise one crore households through financial assistance for rooftop solar installations. The programme reduces electricity costs, promotes clean energy adoption, and encourages household participation in the energy transition. Solar energy is therefore no longer confined to large power plants. It has become part of everyday life for millions of families.

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The scheme reflects a governance model that integrates climate action with welfare delivery. Rather than treating environmental sustainability as a separate policy domain, the government has linked it with household economic empowerment and citizen participation.

Similarly, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) has transformed the relationship between agriculture and energy. By promoting solar-powered irrigation systems and decentralised solar plants, the scheme reduces dependence on diesel, lowers operational costs, and enables farmers to generate supplementary income through surplus power sales. The significance of PM-KUSUM extends beyond energy generation. It supports agricultural sustainability, strengthens rural livelihoods, and promotes income diversification among farming communities. Together, PM Surya Ghar and PM-KUSUM demonstrate how renewable energy can serve as an instrument of social inclusion and economic empowerment.

From Energy Security to Global Leadership

A distinctive feature of India's solar journey has been the emphasis on self-reliance and strategic

autonomy. While India emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing solar markets, policymakers also recognised the risks associated with dependence on imported solar equipment.

To address this challenge, the government introduced the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for high-efficiency solar photovoltaic modules. The scheme promotes domestic manufacturing across the solar value chain, including polysilicon, wafers, cells, and modules. Complementary measures such as the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) and Basic Customs Duty on imported solar equipment have further encouraged domestic production and technological development. Together, these initiatives reflect the broader vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and seek to strengthen India's industrial capabilities.

As solar penetration increases, attention is also shifting towards energy storage and grid flexibility. Policymakers increasingly recognise that the challenge is not only to generate renewable electricity but also to ensure reliable supply. Battery Energy Storage Systems, supported by Viability Gap Funding and Round-the-Clock renewable energy tenders, are designed to enhance grid reliability and facilitate the integration of solar, wind, and storage technologies.

India's solar transformation has also strengthened its international profile. The International Solar

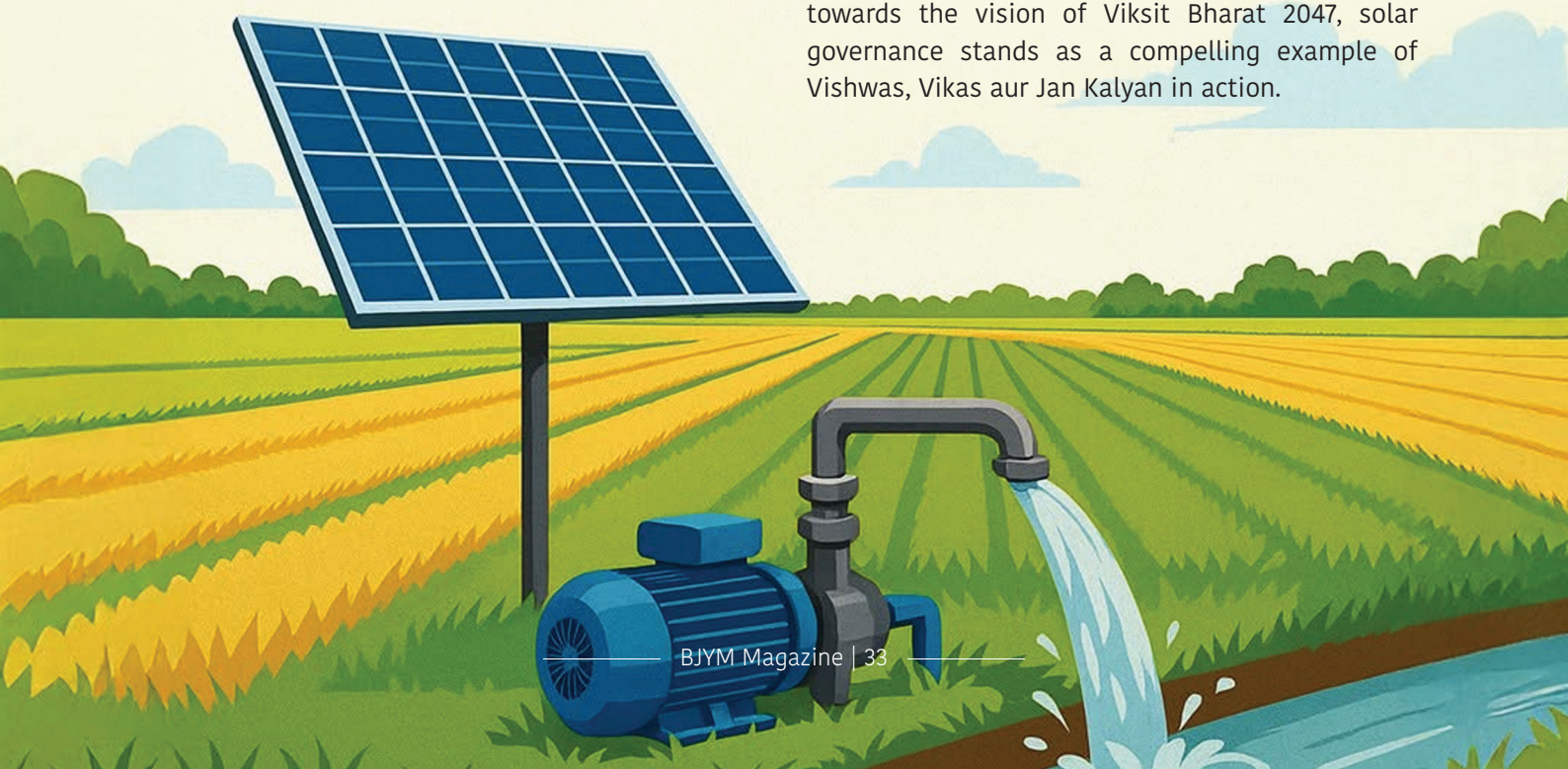
Alliance (ISA), headquartered in India, has emerged as a major platform for renewable energy cooperation. Through technology sharing, capacity building, and financial mobilisation, the ISA supports solar deployment across developing countries, particularly in Africa and small island nations.

Similarly, the One Sun One World One Grid initiative reflects India's ambition to promote international energy cooperation through interconnected renewable energy networks. These initiatives demonstrate how domestic achievements in solar energy have translated into global leadership and strengthened India's position as a leading voice of the Global South.

Conclusion

The transformation of India's solar sector over the past twelve years reflects the broader trajectory of governance reforms undertaken since 2014. Solar policy has evolved from a narrow focus on electricity generation into a multidimensional strategy that advances infrastructure development, citizen welfare, industrial self-reliance, and international leadership.

From solar parks and transmission corridors to rooftop systems and farmer-centric programmes, solar energy has become an instrument of national development. The journey from Surya Mandir to Surya Ghar reflects the fusion of India's civilizational heritage with its aspirations for a modern and sustainable future. As India advances towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, solar governance stands as a compelling example of Vishwas, Vikas aur Jan Kalyan in action.



The Architecture of Trust Technology, Self-Certification and the New Indian State

Abhijay N S

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When Shri Narendra Modi ji took the oath as Prime Minister in May 2014, I was eight years old. I had grown up with an instinctive, almost inherited patriotism, the kind that makes a child stand a little straighter for the national anthem. Even then I followed enough of the news around me to sense that something had shifted in how India spoke about itself, particularly about its armed forces. What drew me to support this government in those early years was never an abstract policy position, but something far more immediate: the way the government treated the soldier and the resolve it brought to India's defence posture. The surgical strikes, the Balakot response, the unapologetic clarity with which Bharat began answering provocation rather than absorbing it quietly- these were the moments that spoke to me directly. That instinct, formed in my youth, only sharpened as I grew older and began following foreign relations and strategic affairs more closely. Twelve years later, at twenty, having spent these years studying technology and policy, I find myself looking back at this period not merely as a citizen recalling memories, but as a young professional analysing what may be the most significant redesign of the Indian state's relationship with its citizens in independent India's history.



Policy circles tend to measure governments by headline numbers, GDP rank, market capitalisation, and the number of unicorns produced. India's rise to become the world's fifth-largest economy certainly earns its place in that conversation. But what strikes me most about the last twelve years is not that bigger story. It is the smaller one, the steady rewiring of how an ordinary citizen experiences the state, one rule, one form, one office visit removed at a time.

The Architecture of Trust

Few reforms made less noise and touched more families, like the end of mandatory gazetted attestation. For decades, a student applying for a scholarship or a job aspirant submitting a form had to hunt down a gazetted officer, often a stranger, often over several visits, just to have their documents stamped and signed. An assumption baked into the system was that a citizen's word about their own identity wasn't good enough on its own.

Self-certification flipped that assumption, trusting the citizen first and verifying only when there was reason to. It saved millions of students and first-time job seekers real time and a quiet daily indignity, and it came packaged with the wider Minimum Government, Maximum Governance push, the scrapping of over 1,500 obsolete laws, decriminalising minor business lapses, and a steady digitisation of citizen-facing offices that left less room for discretion and the corruption that follows it.

The Small Print That Changed Daily Life

Gazetted attestation is the best-known entry in a longer list of changes that never made it into a campaign speech but deserve equal credit. The 2016 decision to scrap interviews for lower-level government recruitment is one example: replacing a subjective round where bias crept in easily with written-test scores alone meant a candidate from a small town with no coaching could finally compete on equal footing. Faceless income tax assessment, rolled out from 2019, did something similar, removing the one named, locally accessible officer

whose discretion over a flagged return rarely worked in the citizen's favour, and replacing that proximity with data and process.

One Nation One Ration Card rarely shows up in retrospectives for an English-speaking audience, but a migrant labourer moving from Bihar to Mumbai used to lose access to subsidised grain the moment they crossed a state line, since entitlements were tied to a fixed address, a problem that portability solved outright. And most recently, the four Labour Codes that came into force in November 2025 folded 29 separate laws and 1,436 rules, some genuinely absurd, including prescribed limewashing schedules for canteen walls, into a far smaller rulebook that finally travels with the worker across states and sectors. It shows a government

that understood something obvious in hindsight: the interface is the policy, and fixing it is often the harder reform.

Digital Public Infrastructure

No reading of tech policy from this period is complete without India's Digital Public Infrastructure. The JAM trinity of Jan Dhan accounts, Aadhaar, and mobile phones built the rails for a new welfare delivery model, and Direct Benefit Transfer running on it has pushed trillions of rupees straight into citizens' accounts, cutting out leakages. UPI is the standout, letting a vegetable vendor in a small town accept digital payments as easily as a metropolitan retailer, a level of inclusion most developed economies took decades longer to reach. Digital India, more broadly, from DigiLocker to CoWIN, reflects a government that has built technology as core public infrastructure rather than merely regulating it from a distance.

GYAN: Gareeb, Yuva, Annadata, Nari

A consistent thread across these twelve years has been governance built around GYAN, the poor, the youth, the farmers, and the women. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana moved families out of kuccha homes, Ayushman Bharat shielded them from medical bills that once pushed households into debt, and Ujjwala Yojana's gas connections changed daily life for

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*The Kashi Vishwanath
 Corridor, the
 Mahakaleshwar Corridor
 in Ujjain, and the
 restoration of the Ram
 Mandir in Ayodhya show
 modern infrastructure
 and civilisational memory
 being rebuilt together.*

women cooking over smoke-filled stoves. Skill India and an expanded startup ecosystem, now the world's third-largest, are converting a much-discussed demographic dividend into something real. PM-KISAN's direct transfers treat agriculture as a sector to strengthen rather than a vote bank to manage seasonally. And schemes from Mudra loans to Self Help Group federations have pushed women from welfare recipients to economic participants.

The Soldier First

What first made me pay attention to this government was not a scheme but the sense that the soldier had moved from the margins of national conversation to its centre, visible well before the operations that later made global headlines. One Rank One Pension, a demand ex-serviceman had carried since the 1970s, was finally implemented in November 2015, backdated to July 2014. Months earlier, after an Army convoy was ambushed in Manipur, India struck back across the Myanmar border, a small operation signalling that provocation would no longer be quietly absorbed. The 2016 surgical strikes after Uri and the 2019 Balakot strikes after Pulwama followed that same doctrine.

Institutionally, the Chief of Defence Staff post created in 2020 gave military planning some jointness, while Atmanirbhar Bharat's push into defence manufacturing, from Tejas jets to indigenous artillery and naval platforms, has cut import dependence and built exports from negligible a decade ago. Border infrastructure in Ladakh and the Northeast, long underfunded out of caution, has finally caught up.

A Confident Foreign

Policy

That same confidence showed up on the world stage. Bharat's 2023 G20 presidency was never merely ceremonial, since it was used to put debt distress, climate finance, and vaccine equity squarely on an agenda the developed world had long sidelined. The Quad, expanding partnerships from the Gulf to the Indo-Pacific, and Bharat's refusal to abandon its own counsel on contentious issues, including its energy ties with Russia despite Western pressure, point to a foreign policy built on strategic autonomy rather than default alignment. Evacuation missions, from Vande Bharat during the pandemic to Operation Ganga from Ukraine and Operation Kaveri from Sudan, showed a state willing to go as far as needed.

A Foundation for Viksit Bharat

What sets this period apart is the discipline to stay with structural change for twelve straight years, from attestation to UPI, from One Rank One Pension to the G20 presidency. The resulting ease of doing business and navigating daily life has empowered citizens, restoring a deep-rooted pride in being a Bharatiya on the global stage. This has been a government redesigning the state rather than merely running it, and development hasn't come at the cost of heritage either.

As Bharat looks toward 2047, these twelve years aren't just reassurance that change is possible; they're a working template for it. The road to Viksit Bharat continues on the foundation that these 12 years of Vishwas, Vikas, and Jan Kalyan have already built.



The story of governance in India is not merely a story of institutions, policies, budgets, and administrative reforms. At its deepest level, it is also a story of ideas. Every era of governance is guided by a particular understanding of society, development, justice, and the relationship between the state and the citizen. In contemporary India, one of the most significant intellectual developments has been the evolution of governance philosophy from the principle of Antyodaya, the rise of the last person, to the larger national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, a developed and self-confident India by the centenary of Independence.

At first glance, these two concepts may appear to belong to different scales. Antyodaya focuses on the most vulnerable individual, while Viksit Bharat speaks of national transformation. Yet, the governance philosophy that has emerged under Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeks to bridge precisely this gap. It argues that national development cannot be built upon islands of prosperity amidst oceans of deprivation. The path to a developed India must pass through the empowerment of those who have historically remained excluded from the benefits of growth.

This approach reflects a continuity of ideas rather than a departure from them. The moral foundation remains Antyodaya, but the horizon has expanded toward Viksit Bharat. The objective is no longer merely poverty alleviation or welfare provision; it is the creation of a society in which every citizen becomes a participant in national progress. In this sense, the journey from Antyodaya to Viksit Bharat represents one of the most important philosophical transformations in contemporary Indian governance.

Rising Together

From Deendayal's Antyodaya to Modi's Viksit Bharat

Abhishek Singh Patel

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Deendayal Upadhyaya and the Idea of Antyodaya

The concept of Antyodaya is most closely associated with Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, one of the foremost political thinkers of modern India. His philosophy of Integral Humanism (Ekatma Manav Darshan) sought to provide an indigenous framework for development rooted in India's civilizational values.

Upadhyaya argued that neither unrestrained capitalism nor state-centric socialism adequately addressed human needs. Both approaches tended to reduce individuals either to economic units or instruments of state policy. In contrast, Integral Humanism emphasized the holistic development of the individual; material, intellectual, social, and spiritual.

Within this framework emerged the idea of Antyodaya: the upliftment of the person standing at the last rung of society. The true measure of governance, according to this philosophy, lies not in the prosperity of the privileged but in the welfare of the weakest. Antyodaya therefore represents more than a welfare principle. It is a moral and ethical framework for public policy. It asks a fundamental question: does development reach the person who needs it most?

For decades, this idea remained an important intellectual influence within the broader nationalist movement. In recent years, however, it has increasingly become a practical guide for governance.

From Welfare Politics to Empowerment-Oriented Governance

For much of post-independence India, welfare policies were often evaluated in terms of allocations and announcements. While many programmes achieved important outcomes, the delivery system frequently faced challenges related to leakages, duplication, exclusion, and administrative inefficiency. The contemporary governance approach has sought to shift the focus from welfare as distribution to welfare as empowerment.

The emphasis has increasingly been on creating

enabling conditions through financial inclusion, access to services, housing, sanitation, healthcare, education, digital connectivity, and entrepreneurship. The objective is not merely to provide assistance but to expand opportunities. This transition reflects an important philosophical shift. Citizens are increasingly viewed not only as beneficiaries but as stakeholders and contributors to national development. Welfare becomes a means of empowerment rather than an end in itself.

The underlying logic is that lasting social transformation occurs when individuals gain the capacity to improve their own lives rather than remain permanently dependent on state support.

The Saturation Approach: Leaving No One Behind
One of the defining features of contemporary governance has been the adoption of what is often described as the saturation approach. Traditional welfare systems frequently operated on selective targeting. While such targeting was necessary in many contexts, it often led to errors in exclusion, administrative complexities, and uneven coverage. The saturation approach seeks to ensure that every eligible citizen receives access to essential public services and welfare benefits. Whether the programme relates to banking, sanitation, housing, electricity, healthcare, cooking fuel, drinking water, or social security, the objective is comprehensive coverage rather than partial intervention. From a governance perspective, this represents an important shift. The focus moves from announcing schemes to ensuring universal reach.

Philosophically, the saturation model reflects the essence of Antyodaya. If even one deserving citizen remains excluded, the objective remains incomplete. Development becomes meaningful only when it reaches the last household, the last village, and the last citizen. This approach has contributed to a governance culture increasingly centred on measurable outcomes and delivery effectiveness.

Last-Mile Governance: The New Development Imperative

One of the greatest challenges in public administration is not policy formulation but policy

implementation. Many programmes fail not because of flawed intentions but because they do not reach their intended beneficiaries. The emphasis on last-mile governance seeks to address this challenge. The concept recognises that development gaps often emerge at the point of delivery. Citizens living in remote villages, tribal regions, border areas, hilly terrains, and urban informal settlements frequently face barriers in accessing public services.

Contemporary governance has increasingly focused on overcoming these barriers through digital platforms, direct benefit transfers, improved connectivity, localised service delivery mechanisms, and greater administrative accountability. The significance of last-mile governance extends beyond administrative efficiency. It represents a democratic commitment to equal citizenship.

When public services reach previously neglected populations, governance becomes more inclusive, trust in institutions increases, and the benefits of development become more broadly distributed. In this sense, last-mile delivery has become one of the most important instruments for translating the philosophy of Antyodaya into practical outcomes. Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas: Expanding the Social Base of Development

The slogan “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas”, later expanded to include “Sabka Vishwas” and “Sabka Prayas,” has become one of the defining expressions of contemporary governance. Its significance lies in the attempt to move beyond narrow social, regional, and political divisions. The central message is that development must be inclusive, participatory, and collective.

From a philosophical perspective, this idea broadens the scope of Antyodaya. While Antyodaya focuses on the weakest individual, Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas emphasises the importance of social cohesion and shared progress. Development is not

viewed as a zero-sum contest among communities or regions. Instead, it is conceived as a collaborative national project in which every citizen has a stake.

The addition of “Sabka Vishwas” highlights the importance of trust between citizens and institutions, while “Sabka Prayas” underscores the role of collective effort in nation-building. Together, these principles seek to create a governance framework that combines inclusion with participation.

Social Justice through Delivery

One of the notable features of contemporary governance discourse has been the emphasis on social justice through delivery. Historically, social justice debates often focused on representation, redistribution, and legal rights. These remain important dimensions of democratic governance. However, there is growing recognition that rights and entitlements have limited meaning if services do not effectively reach citizens.

The emphasis on delivery seeks to ensure that welfare programmes translate into tangible outcomes. In this framework, social justice is measured not only by policy intentions but also by the effectiveness of implementation. Access to housing, sanitation, healthcare, financial services, electricity, and social protection becomes an important indicator of social empowerment.

The use of technology, direct benefit transfers, digital identity systems, and transparent delivery mechanisms has further strengthened this approach. The broader implication is that governance increasingly seeks to reduce the gap between policy promises and lived realities.

Inclusive Nation-Building and the Democratization of Opportunity

The journey from Antyodaya to Viksit Bharat is fundamentally linked to the idea of inclusive nation-building. Historically, development

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*Antyodaya and
 Viksit Bharat
 should be
 understood not as
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 journey.*

opportunities in India have often been unevenly distributed across regions, social groups, and economic categories. Contemporary governance has increasingly emphasised the democratisation of opportunity.

Financial inclusion through Jan Dhan accounts, entrepreneurship support through Mudra loans, women's empowerment through self-help groups, housing initiatives, digital connectivity, and rural infrastructure programmes are all part of a broader effort to expand participation in economic and social life. The objective is not merely to reduce poverty but to create pathways for upward mobility. Inclusive nation-building recognises that every citizen represents a potential contributor to national development. The empowerment of marginalised communities is therefore not only a matter of social justice but also a prerequisite for national progress. A nation becomes stronger when its growth is broad-based, and its opportunities are widely shared.

From Antyodaya to Aspirational India

An important characteristic of contemporary governance is the shift from a discourse of deprivation to a discourse of aspiration. Earlier development paradigms often focused primarily on identifying problems and addressing deficits. While such interventions remain necessary, there is increasing emphasis on enabling citizens to pursue their aspirations.

This shift is evident in programmes related to entrepreneurship, skill development, digital empowerment, startup ecosystems, innovation, and youth engagement. The language of governance increasingly emphasises opportunity, capability, and ambition rather than dependency and scarcity. This evolution reflects a deeper philosophical transformation. Antyodaya remains important, but it is now linked to the idea of aspiration. The goal is not merely to help citizens survive; it is to enable them to thrive. An aspirational society is more dynamic, innovative, and confident. It is also better equipped to contribute to national transformation.

Viksit Bharat 2047: The Expansion of the Governance Horizon

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 represents the culmination of this evolving philosophy. Unlike short-term policy objectives, Viksit Bharat is a long-term national vision. It seeks to transform India into a developed, prosperous, technologically advanced, environmentally sustainable, and globally influential nation by the centenary of Independence.

Importantly, this vision does not abandon the principles of Antyodaya. Rather, it expands them. The argument is straightforward: a developed India cannot be built if large sections of society remain excluded from progress. National development and social inclusion are not competing priorities; they are mutually reinforcing objectives.

The moral foundation remains of service to the last person. The strategic objective becomes national transformation. Thus, Antyodaya and Viksit Bharat should be understood not as separate ideas but as interconnected stages of a larger developmental journey.

Governance as Nation-Building

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this evolving philosophy is the redefinition of governance itself. Governance is no longer viewed solely as administration or service delivery. It is increasingly understood as an instrument of nation-building.

Infrastructure projects connect regions. Welfare programmes expand opportunities. Digital platforms democratize access. Cultural initiatives strengthen identity. Economic reforms create growth. Together, these efforts contribute to a broader national transformation.

In this framework, every policy acquires a larger purpose. Governance becomes a means of empowering citizens while simultaneously strengthening the nation. The resulting vision combines ethical responsibility with developmental ambition.

Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi

Heritage, Restoration and India's Cultural Resurgence

Aman Rawat

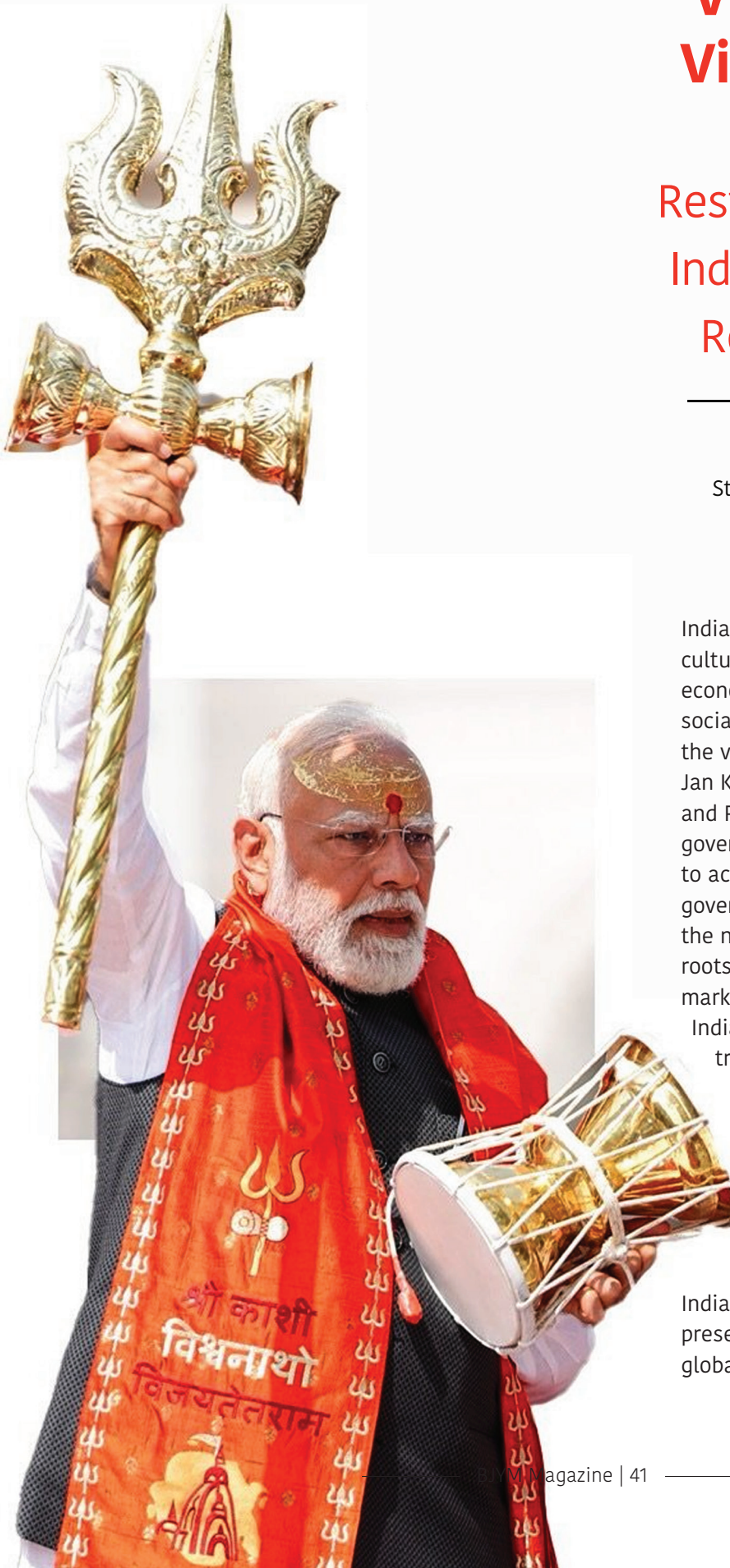
Student and Defence
Enthusiast

India has witnessed a significant cultural resurgence alongside its economic, technological, and social transformation. Guided by the vision of "Vishwas, Vikas aur Jan Kalyan" (Trust, Development, and Public Welfare), the government has sought not only to accelerate growth and improve governance but also to reconnect the nation with its civilizational roots. This period has been marked by renewed emphasis on India's cultural heritage, traditional knowledge

systems, languages, arts, spiritual traditions, and historical consciousness.

The result has been what many describe as a cultural renaissance, an effort to preserve

India's rich legacy while presenting it confidently on the global stage.



One of the defining features of this revival has been the restoration and development of sites of immense religious and historical significance. The redevelopment of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi, with the first phase completed at approximately ₹350 crore (overall project estimated at ₹800-900 crore, including ancillary works), transformed one of Hinduism's holiest pilgrimage centres by improving accessibility, public amenities, and connectivity while preserving its spiritual character. Likewise, the construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, funded by approximately ₹1,800-1,900 crore in donations from devotees, did not occur in isolation. The Government, owing to the historicity of the event, has vowed to make a contribution of ₹85,000 crore for redevelopment of Ayodhya as a testament to its linkage with the civilizational legacy of India, marked the total realisation of a long-cherished aspiration for millions of devotees and emerged as a defining symbol of cultural resurgence. The Mahakal Lok Corridor in Ujjain, developed at a cost of nearly ₹856 crore, revitalised the precincts surrounding the Mahakaleshwar Temple by integrating modern infrastructure with traditional architectural aesthetics.

The government's efforts, reflective of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas", also aim to preserve spiritual heritage for all religions. The Kartarpur Corridor, developed at an estimated cost of around ₹120 crore on the Indian side, has facilitated easier access for pilgrims to one of Sikhism's holiest shrines. Similarly, infrastructure upgrades for Shri Hemkund Sahib, including the proposed ropeway project valued at approximately ₹2,703 crore, aim to improve accessibility for devotees. Under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, approximately ₹361.97 crore has been allocated for the development of Buddhist circuits and heritage destinations, including Bodhi Gaya and Kushinagar. The Kushinagar International Airport, developed at a cost of ₹448 crore, has further strengthened Buddhist pilgrimage tourism and international

connectivity.

Complementing these efforts, the PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive) Scheme, with sanctioned projects exceeding ₹1,727 crore, has supported infrastructure and conservation initiatives at Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Muslim, Christian, and Hindu pilgrimage sites. Together, these investments reflect a broader commitment to preserving India's diverse religious traditions while generating tourism, regional development, and economic growth. Efforts to conserve and showcase India's cultural heritage have also been accompanied by substantial investments in monuments, museums, and archival preservation.

Through initiatives such as Adopt a Heritage and the National Culture Fund, conservation work has been undertaken at iconic sites including the Red Fort, Humayun's Tomb, and the Konark Sun Temple. The museum sector has similarly witnessed significant expansion. Through the Museum Grant Scheme, hundreds of crores have been allocated for the modernisation and development of museums nationwide. Among the most ambitious museum projects is the proposed Yuge Yugeen Bharat

National Museum in New Delhi, jointly developed with France (in collaboration with France Museums Développement) and set to showcase 5,000 years of Indian civilizational history, from the Indus Valley Civilisation to modern times, across eight thematic segments.

At the same time, initiatives such as the National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (NMA) and the National Mission for Manuscripts have accelerated the digitisation and documentation of millions of artefacts, manuscripts, and archaeological records. Notably, the National Mission for Manuscripts has digitised over 8 lakh manuscripts, of which 1.29 lakh manuscripts are accessible to the public on the National Digital Repository (NDR). In addition, the National Manuscript Survey was launched on 16th March

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The cultural renaissance of the past twelve years reflects a broader understanding that culture is not merely a legacy of the past but a dynamic force shaping the future.

2026 to identify, document, and create a comprehensive national database of manuscripts held by institutions, private individuals, scholars, mutts, temples, libraries, and other repositories, with more than 12.97 lakh manuscripts documented so far. During FY2025-26, a total of ₹13.29 crore was utilised as on 15th March 2026. This Mission has also been mandated to establish a nationwide network of Cluster Centres (CCs) and Independent Centres (ICs) to preserve invaluable historical and scholarly works for future generations.

Language and education have emerged as key pillars of India's cultural renaissance. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduced a transformative approach by promoting mother-tongue and regional-language instruction, particularly during the foundational years of schooling, while integrating Indian knowledge systems into mainstream education. To support multilingual learning, digital platforms such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM have expanded educational content across numerous

Indian languages, reaching millions of students and

educators nationwide.

Sanskrit, often regarded as a repository of India's intellectual and philosophical heritage, received renewed institutional support through the Central Sanskrit University Act, 2020, which elevated 3 deemed Sanskrit universities to Central University status. A major technological initiative in this domain has been the Bhashini Mission, launched with an early proposal of ₹450 crore to develop AI-powered translation, speech recognition, and language technology tools across India's diverse linguistic landscape. These initiatives seek to ensure that technological progress strengthens rather than weakens India's linguistic diversity. Educational reforms have also encouraged greater engagement with Indian philosophy, traditional sciences, yoga, and cultural heritage, fostering awareness of India's civilizational legacy among younger generations. India's traditional systems of knowledge and wellness have also experienced renewed prominence.

Yoga, one of India's most influential cultural contributions to the world, achieved unprecedented global recognition following



the United Nations' adoption of the International Day of Yoga in 2014, with the support of a record 177 countries. Annual celebrations now attract millions of participants worldwide, transforming yoga into a global movement for health and well-being. In 2024 alone, more than 24.5 crore people participated in International Day of Yoga events, reflecting its growing global reach and acceptance. Government support for yoga education, research, certification, and international outreach has reinforced India's position as a global ambassador of holistic wellness.

Similarly, traditional healthcare systems under the AYUSH framework, including Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani & Siddha, have received unprecedented institutional support. Through the National AYUSH Mission and related initiatives, healthcare infrastructure has expanded significantly, with over 12,500 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AYUSH) serving communities across the country. These centres now benefit more than 11.5 crore people annually, while an additional 5.6 crore beneficiaries have accessed services through AYUSH tertiary-care institutions. Expanded research, wellness centres, educational institutions, and international collaborations, including the establishment of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in Jamnagar, have helped promote indigenous healthcare practices both domestically and internationally, strengthening India's reputation as a global centre of traditional wellness and preventive healthcare.

The promotion of Indian arts, crafts, and cultural industries has been another important dimension of this transformation. Numerous initiatives have sought to support artisans, weavers, folk performers, tribal artists, and traditional craftsmen whose skills represent centuries of accumulated cultural knowledge. Programs promoting indigenous products, including One District One Product (ODOP) and PM Vishwakarma, have expanded access to training, financial support, and market opportunities. The emphasis on "Vocal for Local" has contributed not only to economic empowerment but also to the preservation of cultural identities embedded in local crafts and traditions. Cultural diplomacy has emerged as a

powerful instrument of India's international engagement during this period. The handicrafts market in India reached US\$ 4.56 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach US\$ 8.19 billion by 2033, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.39% during 2025-2033, according to IMARC Group's forecasts. The market growth in India is driven by significant improvements in the accessibility of handicraft products on various online platforms. Additionally, the surge in travel and tourism within the country is driving a notable increase in the popularity of handicrafts. Tourists are increasingly investing in souvenirs and other handcrafted items, thereby creating opportunities for local artisans and craftsmen to efficiently develop and market their high-quality handicrafts.

As India marks twelve years of transformative governance under the theme of "Vishwas, Vikas aur Jan Kalyan," The cultural dimension of this transformation deserves special recognition. The period has witnessed sustained efforts to preserve heritage, revive traditions, promote indigenous knowledge systems, strengthen cultural confidence, and project India's civilizational identity globally. From the restoration of sacred sites and modernisation of museums to the promotion of Indian languages and the global expansion of yoga, these initiatives reflect a comprehensive vision of nation-building. The cultural renaissance of the past twelve years reflects a broader understanding that culture is not merely a legacy of the past but a dynamic force shaping the future. By reconnecting development with civilizational consciousness, India has sought to foster pride, unity, and confidence among its citizens. As the country continues its journey toward becoming a leading global power, its cultural resurgence stands as an important pillar of national transformation, demonstrating that economic progress and cultural preservation can advance hand in hand.

The roots of banking-sector reform lie in the challenges that emerged during the high-growth years of the late 2000s. Between 2006 and 2011, Indian banks substantially expanded credit to support infrastructure projects, power generation, steel production, telecommunications, highways, and large industrial ventures.

These investments were expected to accelerate economic growth and create productive assets. However, many projects encountered delays arising from land acquisition issues, environmental clearances, litigation, regulatory bottlenecks, policy uncertainty, and adverse global economic conditions following the international financial crisis.

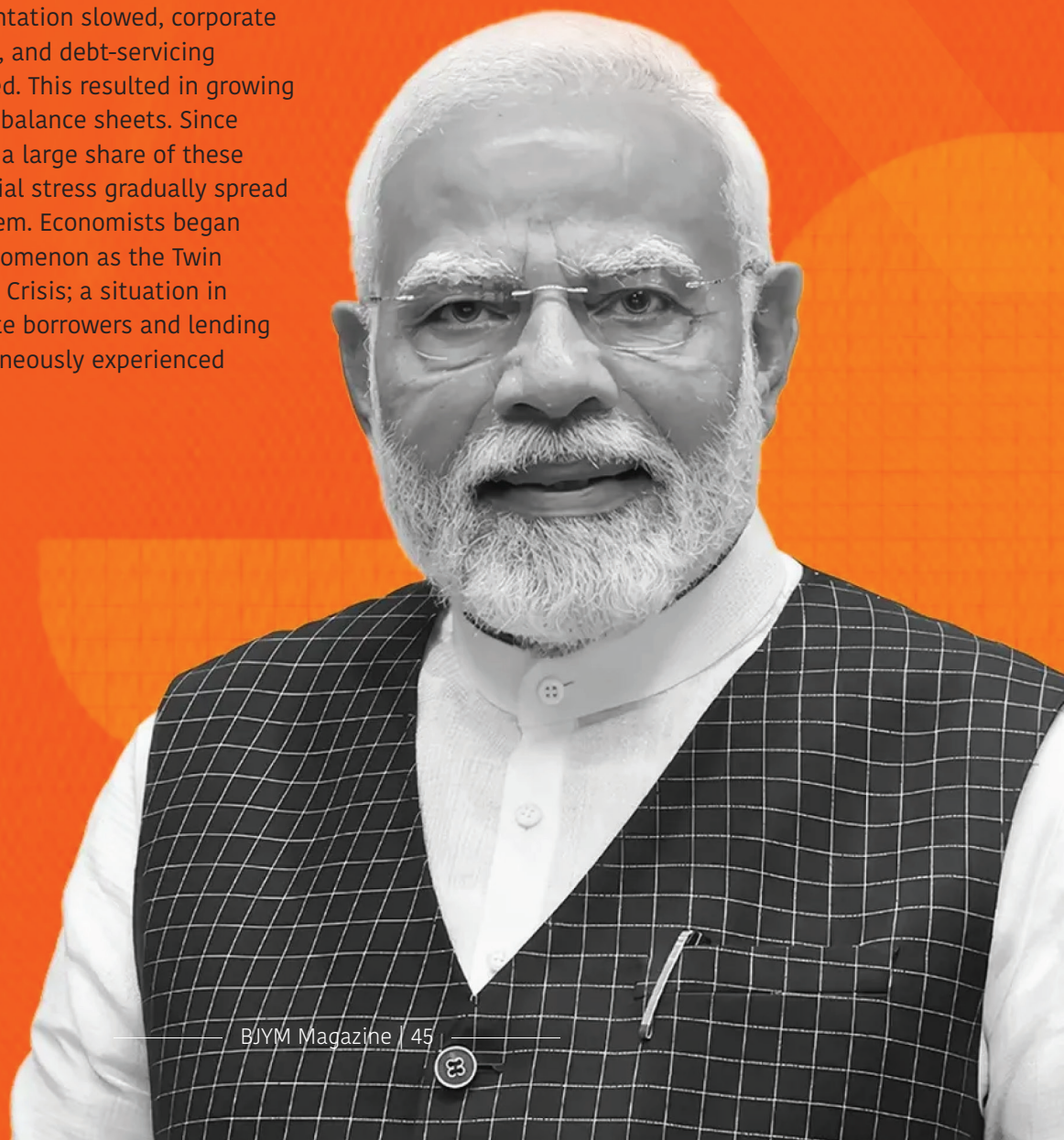
As project implementation slowed, corporate revenues weakened, and debt-servicing capacity deteriorated. This resulted in growing stress on corporate balance sheets. Since banks had financed a large share of these investments, financial stress gradually spread to the banking system. Economists began describing the phenomenon as the Twin Balance Sheet (TBS) Crisis; a situation in which both corporate borrowers and lending institutions simultaneously experienced financial distress.

From Indradhanush to Saptarshi

A Decade of Banking Reforms

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The problem was compounded by the widespread practice of loan restructuring and ever-greening. Rather than recognising stressed assets immediately, some banks extended additional credit or modified repayment schedules in order to avoid classifying loans as non-performing. While this approach temporarily concealed the problem, it delayed corrective action and reduced transparency.

The true magnitude of banking-sector stress became visible following the Reserve Bank of India's Asset Quality Review (AQR) conducted between 2015 and 2017. The review required banks to recognise previously undisclosed stressed assets and adopt more realistic assessments of loan quality. The results were striking. Gross NPAs of public sector banks rose sharply, reaching approximately 11.6 per cent by March 2018. Profitability declined, lending capacity weakened, and concerns emerged about banks' ability to support economic growth. The crisis highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive structural reforms. Mission Indradhanush: A Framework for Banking Sector Revival

Recognizing that the challenges confronting public sector banks were systemic rather than temporary, the Government of India launched Mission Indradhanush in August 2015. The programme represented a comprehensive strategy for revitalising public sector banks through a combination of capital support, governance reforms, institutional accountability, and operational strengthening. The term 'Indradhanush' symbolised a seven-pronged reform framework encompassing reforms in appointments, bank boards, capitalisation, de-stressing, empowerment, accountability, and governance. A central component of the programme was recapitalisation. Strong capital buffers are essential for maintaining financial stability and supporting lending activities. To strengthen bank balance sheets and ensure compliance with Basel III norms, the government initially committed ₹70,000 crore and subsequently provided cumulative capital support exceeding ₹3 lakh crore between 2015 and 2021.

This infusion of capital enabled banks to absorb losses, improve capital adequacy, and resume normal lending operations. Equally important were governance reforms designed to enhance professionalism and accountability. Efforts were made to improve board-level oversight, strengthen risk-management practices, and reduce operational inefficiencies. Mission Indradhanush therefore represented more than a financial rescue package. It sought to address institutional weaknesses that had contributed to the accumulation of stressed assets.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code: Transforming Credit Discipline

While recapitalisation strengthened bank balance sheets, a sustainable solution required improvements in the broader credit ecosystem. The enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) in 2016 marked a landmark reform in this regard. Prior to the IBC, insolvency resolution processes were often fragmented, prolonged, and ineffective. Recovery of stressed assets frequently involved lengthy litigation and uncertain outcomes. The IBC introduced a time-bound framework for resolving corporate insolvency. It strengthened creditor rights, improved recovery mechanisms, and encouraged greater financial discipline among borrowers. The reform altered incentives across the credit market. Borrowers became more conscious of repayment obligations, while lenders gained stronger legal tools for recovering dues.

Although implementation challenges remain, the IBC has significantly improved the institutional environment for credit allocation and helped restore confidence in the banking system. The combination of recapitalization and insolvency reform laid the foundation for a more resilient financial architecture.

Consolidation and the Emergence of Stronger Public Sector Banks

Another major dimension of banking-sector reform involved the consolidation of public sector banks. Historically, India's banking landscape included numerous PSBs of varying sizes and capacities. While this structure reflected historical evolution, it

also led to resource duplication, fragmented operations, and varying levels of efficiency.

Between 2017 and 2020, a major consolidation exercise reduced the number of public sector banks from 27 to 12. The objective was to create larger institutions capable of benefiting from economies of scale, stronger risk-management systems, improved capital allocation, and enhanced competitiveness.

Larger banks are generally better positioned to finance major infrastructure projects, support industrial growth, invest in technology, and compete in increasingly sophisticated financial markets. The consolidation process also sought to improve operational efficiency while creating institutions capable of supporting India's long-term developmental ambitions.

Measurable Outcomes of Reform

The cumulative impact of these reforms became increasingly evident during the subsequent decade. Public sector banks experienced a remarkable improvement in asset quality. Gross NPAs declined from approximately 11.6 per cent in 2018 to about 2.58 per cent by March 2025. Capital adequacy ratios improved substantially, exceeding regulatory requirements.

Profitability also strengthened. Banks that had once struggled with losses began reporting healthier balance sheets and stronger financial performance. These developments restored confidence among investors, depositors, regulators, and borrowers. The transformation is reflected in several key indicators:

Table 1: Selected Indicators of Banking Sector Transformation in India

Indicator	2018-19	2024-25
Gross NPA Ratio (PSBs)	11.6%	2.58%
Number of PSBs	27	12
PMJDY Accounts	35.2 crore	56.2 crore
Capital Adequacy Ratio (PSBs)	12.2%	Above 16%
UPI Transactions	535 crore	18,000+ crore annually

Source: Compiled by the author from Reserve Bank of India (2024, 2025), Ministry of Finance reports, and PIB releases (2025-2026).

These figures indicate not merely recovery but substantial strengthening of India's banking ecosystem.

Digital Financial Inclusion and the JAM Revolution

Banking-sector reforms coincided with an equally significant transformation in financial inclusion. The JAM architecture; Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile; created the foundation for a digitally enabled financial ecosystem capable of reaching citizens at an unprecedented scale.

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), launched in 2014, sought to provide universal access to banking services. By 2025, more than 56 crore accounts had been opened, making it one of the largest financial inclusion programmes in the world. Importantly, a substantial proportion of these accounts belong to rural and semi-urban households that were previously excluded from formal financial systems.

Financial inclusion has implications extending far beyond banking access. It facilitates savings, access to credit, insurance coverage, direct benefit transfers, and economic participation. The JAM architecture therefore transformed banking from a predominantly urban service into a mass developmental instrument.

UPI and the Digital Payments Revolution

If Jan Dhan expanded access to banking, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) revolutionised the way financial transactions are conducted. Developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), UPI created a secure, interoperable, and real-time digital payments ecosystem. Its growth has been extraordinary. From modest beginnings, annual UPI transactions crossed 18,000 crores by 2025-26, making India home to the world's largest real-time digital payments system. UPI has reduced transaction costs, enhanced convenience, promoted financial transparency, and supported the formalisation of economic activity.

For small businesses, street vendors, rural entrepreneurs, and consumers, digital payments have become an integral part of daily life. The success of UPI illustrates how technological innovation can complement banking-sector reforms

by extending the benefits of financial modernisation to the broader population.

From Financial Stability to Developmental Finance

The strengthening of India's banking sector has broader significance because banks play a crucial role in financing development. Infrastructure projects, manufacturing expansion, renewable energy investments, urban development, logistics systems, and emerging industries all require long-term capital.

A weak banking system cannot effectively support such investments. Conversely, a healthy banking sector can act as a catalyst for economic transformation. The reforms undertaken since 2015, therefore, have implications that extend well beyond financial stability. They have enhanced banks' capacity to support India's aspirations for sustained growth and structural transformation. This shift from crisis management to developmental finance forms the backdrop for the emergence of the Saptarshi Framework.

The Saptarshi Framework: A Vision for Viksit Bharat

The Union Budget 2023-24 introduced the Saptarshi Framework, outlining seven priority areas intended to guide India's developmental trajectory toward 2047. These priorities include inclusive development, reaching the last mile, infrastructure and investment, unleashing potential, green growth, youth power, and the financial sector.

Unlike Mission Indradhanush, which focused on repairing institutions, Saptarshi seeks to leverage institutional strengths to pursue long-term national objectives. The framework reflects a transition from stabilisation to transformation. It recognises that sustained development requires strong financial institutions capable of mobilising capital, supporting innovation, financing infrastructure, and promoting inclusion.

Financial Sector Modernisation in the Saptarshi Era
The financial sector occupies a central place within the Saptarshi vision. Several initiatives illustrate this emphasis. The proposed National Financial Information Registry seeks to improve credit

assessment and information sharing, thereby enhancing efficiency within financial markets.

The Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), commonly referred to as the Digital Rupee, represents India's exploration of next-generation monetary technologies. Similarly, the continued development of GIFT City aims to strengthen India's position within global financial networks and create a world-class international financial services hub.

These initiatives indicate a broader ambition: to transform India from a large domestic financial market into a globally integrated financial centre capable of supporting future economic expansion.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

Despite substantial progress, important challenges remain. Maintaining asset quality requires continued vigilance. Credit growth must be accompanied by robust risk assessment and prudent lending practices. Rapid technological change introduces new concerns relating to cybersecurity, data protection, digital fraud, and operational resilience.

Climate change and sustainability considerations will increasingly influence lending decisions and investment strategies. Financial inclusion must also evolve beyond account ownership to encompass meaningful access to credit, insurance, pensions, and wealth-creation opportunities. Finally, regional disparities in financial access require continued attention to ensure that developmental gains are broadly shared. Addressing these challenges will be essential for sustaining the achievements of recent reforms.

Development Through Women

Nari Shakti and the New India

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The idea of Nari Shakti occupies an increasingly central place in India's contemporary development discourse. Rooted in India's civilizational traditions, the concept recognises women not merely as recipients of support but as sources of strength, creativity, resilience, and leadership.

Historically, women have played vital roles in India's social, cultural, and economic life. From Vedic scholars and freedom fighters to educators, entrepreneurs, scientists, and political leaders, women have contributed significantly to nation-building. Yet structural barriers often limited their participation and recognition.

The policy emphasis on Nari Shakti seeks to address this gap by integrating gender considerations across multiple sectors rather than confining them to isolated welfare programmes. Women's empowerment is increasingly viewed as a cross-cutting objective that influences education, health, finance, entrepreneurship, governance, technology, and security.



This represents a conceptual shift from “development for women” to “development through women.” The difference is profound. Women are no longer seen only as participants in development; they are increasingly viewed as leaders of development.

Dignity, Health, and the Foundations of Empowerment

Meaningful empowerment begins with dignity. Before women can fully participate in economic and public life, they must have access to basic amenities that improve health, safety, and quality of life. Several initiatives over the past decade have focused on this foundational dimension. The expansion of sanitation infrastructure through Swachh Bharat, access to clean cooking fuel through the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, improved access to drinking water, and expanded healthcare coverage have had important implications for women.

The significance of the Ujjwala programme extends beyond energy access. For millions of women, clean cooking fuel has reduced exposure to indoor air pollution, improved health outcomes, and saved valuable time previously spent collecting firewood and traditional fuels. Similarly, access to household toilets has enhanced dignity, privacy, and safety, particularly in rural areas. These interventions may appear basic, yet they address everyday challenges that disproportionately affect women.

From a governance perspective, dignity itself becomes a developmental resource. Women who are healthier, safer, and more empowered are better positioned to participate in education, employment, entrepreneurship, and public life.

Financial Inclusion: Bringing Women into the Economic Mainstream

Financial inclusion has emerged as one of the most transformative dimensions of women’s empowerment. Historically, many women lacked

access to formal banking systems, savings mechanisms, credit facilities, and financial decision-making processes. Economic dependence often limits their ability to exercise agency in both household and community contexts.

The expansion of bank accounts under the Jan Dhan programme, combined with Direct Benefit Transfers and digital financial systems, has significantly increased women’s participation in formal financial networks. The importance of financial inclusion extends beyond banking. Access to savings, credit, insurance, and digital payments strengthens economic autonomy. Women gain greater control over resources and become more active participants in household and community decision-making.

Digital financial technologies have further accelerated this process. Mobile banking, digital payments, and financial literacy initiatives are helping bridge longstanding barriers to economic participation. The broader outcome is the gradual democratisation of financial opportunity.

The Self-Help Group Revolution

One of the most significant yet often underappreciated transformations in rural India has been the growth of women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

Across villages and small towns, millions of women have organised themselves into community-based groups that promote savings, access to credit, entrepreneurship, and collective action. These groups have evolved far beyond their original financial functions.

Today, SHGs play important roles in local governance, livelihood generation, social awareness, agricultural value chains, and community development initiatives. They represent one of the world’s largest experiments in grassroots women’s empowerment. The success of SHGs lies in their ability to combine economic activity with social capital. Women gain not only access to resources but also confidence, leadership skills, and collective bargaining power.

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Many SHGs have expanded into micro-enterprises, food processing units, handicrafts, agricultural ventures, and service-sector activities. In doing so, they contribute both to household incomes and rural economic development. The SHG movement demonstrates that women's empowerment is most effective when it combines financial support with community participation and leadership development.

Women Entrepreneurship and the New Growth Story

India's economic transformation increasingly depends on entrepreneurship, innovation, and small-business growth. Women entrepreneurs are becoming an important part of this story. For decades, women's economic participation was concentrated in informal sectors with limited access to capital, technology, and markets. Contemporary policy initiatives have sought to address these constraints through financial inclusion, support for entrepreneurship, digital platforms, and skill development programmes.

The rise of women-led enterprises is visible across sectors ranging from agriculture and handicrafts to technology startups and e-commerce ventures. Women are increasingly starting businesses, creating jobs, and contributing to local economies. Entrepreneurship has a multiplier effect. A woman entrepreneur often invests in education, health, and community welfare, creating broader developmental benefits.

entrepreneurship changes social perceptions. It challenges traditional assumptions about gender roles and broadens the horizons of possibility for future generations. In this sense, women entrepreneurs are not merely economic actors; they are agents of social transformation.

Political Representation and Democratic Participation

Political empowerment remains a crucial component of women-led development. The participation of women in governance strengthens democratic legitimacy and improves the responsiveness of public institutions. Over the years, women have played increasingly important roles in local governments, state legislatures, Parliament, and public administration.

The passage of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, providing for greater representation of women in legislative institutions, has further reinforced the commitment to expanding women's political participation. At the grassroots level, women's representation in Panchayati Raj institutions has transformed local governance in many parts of the country. Women leaders have contributed to improved attention to issues such as health, education, sanitation, water management, and community welfare.

Political participation is important not merely because it enhances representation but because it changes governance priorities and strengthens democratic inclusiveness. A

More importantly,

truly developed
nation requires



the active participation of women in decision-making at every level.

Women in STEM, Innovation, and the Knowledge Economy

The twenty-first century is increasingly driven by knowledge, technology, and innovation. Consequently, women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) has acquired strategic importance. India has made notable progress in expanding opportunities for women in higher education, scientific research, digital technologies, and innovation ecosystems. Women scientists have contributed significantly to India's achievements in space exploration, biotechnology, medicine, information technology, and research.

The visibility of women in institutions such as ISRO has become a powerful symbol of changing aspirations. Young girls increasingly view science, engineering, and technological innovation as viable career pathways. The importance of STEM participation extends beyond individual success. It strengthens national competitiveness, expands the talent pool, and contributes to technological self-reliance. As India seeks to emerge as a global innovation hub, the inclusion of women in the knowledge economy becomes not merely desirable but essential.

Women in the Armed Forces and Public Institutions

Another significant dimension of contemporary transformation has been the expansion of opportunities for women within traditionally male-dominated institutions. Women are increasingly serving in leadership positions across the armed forces, police services, judiciary, bureaucracy, diplomacy, and public administration. Policy reforms have expanded opportunities for women officers in various branches of the military, reflecting broader changes in institutional culture. The significance of these developments extends beyond employment opportunities. They challenge long-standing stereotypes regarding leadership, capability, and public service. Women serving in uniform symbolise a broader societal

transformation; one in which national service, security, and leadership are viewed as responsibilities shared by all citizens irrespective of gender. Their growing presence strengthens both institutional diversity and democratic inclusiveness.

Women-Led Development and the Vision of Viksit Bharat

The concept of Viksit Bharat 2047 places women at the centre of India's developmental aspirations. A developed India cannot be built solely through infrastructure, economic growth, or technological advancement. It also requires social inclusion, human capital development, and broad-based participation in national progress. Women constitute nearly half of India's population. Their educational attainment, workforce participation, entrepreneurial success, political leadership, and social empowerment directly influence national outcomes.

The vision of women-led development recognizes that empowering women is not merely a matter of justice; it is a matter of national strategy. When women participate fully in economic and social life, productivity rises, communities become more resilient, and developmental gains become more sustainable. Thus, women-led development is not a sectoral policy. It is a nation-building strategy.

Sabka Vikas, Starting with Youth

Opportunity, Trust
and a Generation
Renewed

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The India of 2014: A Nation at a Crossroads

To understand the magnitude of transformation India has witnessed, one must recall the India of 2014. A decade of governance drift had left the nation demoralised. Policy paralysis was not merely a political phrase; it was a lived reality. Young Indians, armed with degrees and ambitions, found themselves confronting a jobs market corroded by cronyism, a startup ecosystem still in its infancy, and a government that seemed to respond to aspiration with indifference. Scam after scam eroded public trust. Inflation ran rampant. The rupee hovered at historic lows. For millions of young Indians, emigration felt less like a choice and more like a necessity.



It was against this backdrop that Narendra Modi arrived on the national stage with a simple but electrifying promise: Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas together with all, Development for all. For India's youth, it was not just a political slogan. It was a covenant.

The Governance Reset: Clarity, Accountability, and Trust

What the Modi government achieved in its first term was, above all, a restoration of institutional credibility. The Jan Dhan Yojana, launched within months of taking office, brought over 530 million previously unbanked citizens into the formal financial system (Ministry of Finance, 2024). This was not merely a welfare measure; it was the foundational infrastructure for a new economic architecture. Direct Benefit Transfers, enabled by JAM (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile), eliminated middlemen, plugged leakages worth hundreds of thousands of crores, and ensured that entitlements reached citizens directly (NITI Aayog, 2023).

For young Indians entering civic and professional life, the signal was unmistakable: governance could be efficient, transparent, and honest. The Goods and Services Tax (GST), despite initial turbulence, unified a fragmented tax ecosystem and created a level playing field for entrepreneurs. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) reforms reduced the time to resolve insolvencies from over four years to under 300 days, making India's business environment significantly more predictable (World Bank, 2020). India's rank in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index climbed from 142 in 2014 to 63 in 2020, a transformation without precedent (World Bank, 2020).

A New Architecture for Youth Empowerment

Perhaps the most consequential legacy of the Modi government for India's youth is the constellation of flagship schemes that rewired the relationship between young Indians and economic opportunity.

Skill India, launched in 2015, set the ambitious target of skilling 400 million Indians by 2022. By 2024, over 20 million individuals had been trained under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) alone (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2024). The initiative recognised a fundamental truth: in a nation where more than 65% of the population is under 35, skilling is not optional it is existential.

Startup India, launched in January 2016, catalysed what is today one of the world's most vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystems. India is now home to over 1,40,000 DPIIT-recognised startups and more than 100 unicorns (DPIIT, 2024). From Bengaluru to Bhagalpur, young Indians are no longer merely seeking employment; they are creating it. The PM Mudra Yojana has disbursed over ₹27 lakh crore in collateral-free loans to micro and small entrepreneurs since 2015, with women and first-generation entrepreneurs forming a significant share of beneficiaries (Ministry of Finance, 2024).

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents perhaps the boldest reimagining of India's educational architecture since independence. By introducing multidisciplinary learning, vocational integration, mother-tongue-based early education, and a flexible credit framework, NEP 2020 positions India's youth to compete not just domestically but on the global stage (Ministry of Education, 2020). The emphasis on coding from Class 6, the inclusion of Artificial Intelligence in school curricula, and the Academic Bank of Credits signal that Indian education is finally aligning itself with the demands of the 21st century.

Digital India: The Great Equaliser

No dimension of the Modi government's youth-oriented transformation is more visible than Digital India. The Unified Payments Interface (UPI), developed under the National Payments Corporation of India, has made India the world leader in real-time digital payments. In 2023-24, UPI

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A generation that has grown up with UPI, founded startups, earned Olympic medals, launched satellites, and voted in record numbers is not a generation that lacks ambition or capability.
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processed over 131 billion transactions worth more than ₹200 lakh crore, figures that surpass the combined digital payment volumes of the United States and Europe (NPCI, 2024). For a young vendor in a village market or a student paying tuition fees in a small town, UPI has been genuinely revolutionary.

The BharatNet project, connecting over 2.5 lakh gram panchayats with high-speed broadband, and the rapid expansion of 4G and 5G coverage have democratised access to information, education, and markets in ways unimaginable a decade ago (Ministry of Communications, 2024). Edtech, agritech, healthtech, entire sectors built by young Indians have become possible because of this digital infrastructure.

A New National Identity: Pride, Purpose, and Participation

Beyond the metrics and schemes lies something more intangible but perhaps more significant: a transformation in how young Indians see themselves and their country. The Modi government has consistently projected India not as a supplicant seeking international validation but as a civilisational state confident in its heritage and assertive in its ambitions. Whether it was India's decisive response to cross-border terrorism, the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir, the hosting of G20 with a Global South agenda, or the Chandrayaan-3 mission landing on the lunar south pole, each moment has reinforced for young Indians that their nation is a consequential actor on the world stage.

This sense of national pride is not jingoism; it is confidence. And confidence, for a generation that grew up being told to look westward for inspiration, is transformative. India's young people are increasingly choosing to build, invest, and contribute here. The reverse brain drain is real: Indian professionals from Silicon Valley and London are returning to participate in what they recognise as one of the great economic stories of the 21st century.

2047: The Youth as Architects of Viksit Bharat

When Prime Minister Modi articulates the vision of

Viksit Bharat 2047, a developed India by the centenary of independence, he is not merely setting a policy target. He is issuing a generational summons. The youth of today, between the ages of 18 and 35, will be in the prime of their professional lives when 2047 arrives. They are not spectators to this vision; they are its protagonists.

The infrastructure of empowerment, digital connectivity, accessible finance, quality education, ease of enterprise that twelve years of governance have built is the launching pad. What India's youth does with it will determine whether 2047 is a milestone or merely a calendar date. The evidence of the past twelve years suggests cause for genuine optimism. A generation that has grown up with UPI, founded startups, earned Olympic medals, launched satellites, and voted in record numbers is not a generation that lacks ambition or capability.

Twelve years of Vishwas, Vikas aur Jan Kalyan have not merely changed India's economy or its infrastructure. They have changed the psychology of a generation from resignation to aspiration, from dependency to enterprise, from doubt to conviction. That, perhaps more than any GDP figure or ranking, is the most enduring legacy of this era of transformative governance.

Beyond Administration

How India Moved from Governance to Transformation

Monika Kumari

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The last twelve years under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi have marked a transformative chapter in India's democratic and developmental journey. Since assuming office in 2014, the Modi government has sought to redefine governance by emphasising transparency, efficiency, accountability, and citizen-centric administration. Guided by the principles of Vishwas (Trust), Vikas (Development), and Jan Kalyan (Public Welfare), the government has implemented a wide range of reforms and initiatives that have impacted nearly every aspect of national life.

Over the past decade, India has witnessed significant progress in infrastructure development, digital transformation, economic growth, social welfare, national security, environmental sustainability, and global diplomacy. The vision has been not merely to administer but to transform—to create an India that is empowered, self-reliant, technologically advanced, and globally respected. The journey from 2014 to 2025 reflects a governance model that seeks to balance economic development with social justice, strengthen democratic institutions, and promote inclusive growth.



Infrastructure Development: Building the Foundations of New India

One of the most visible achievements of the past twelve years has been the unprecedented expansion of infrastructure across the country. Recognising infrastructure as the backbone of economic growth, the government has invested heavily in highways, railways, airports, ports, urban transport systems, and digital connectivity.

Flagship programs such as Bharatmala and Sagarmala have significantly improved road and port infrastructure, facilitating trade, reducing logistics costs, and enhancing regional connectivity. The development of expressways and economic corridors has accelerated industrial growth while connecting previously underserved regions to national markets.

Indian Railways has undergone extensive modernisation. The introduction of Vande Bharat trains, station redevelopment projects, railway electrification, and freight corridor development has improved efficiency and passenger experience. Simultaneously, the expansion of metro rail networks in several cities has enhanced urban mobility and reduced traffic congestion.

The PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan has introduced integrated planning and coordination among various ministries and departments. This initiative aims to improve infrastructure execution, minimise delays, and optimise resource utilisation.

The government has also expanded airport infrastructure under the UDAN scheme, making air travel more accessible and affordable for ordinary citizens. As a result, regional connectivity has improved significantly, contributing to economic integration and tourism development.

Digital India: Revolutionising Governance and Service Delivery

Digital transformation has emerged as one of the defining features of the Modi government's governance model. The Digital India initiative has fundamentally changed how citizens interact with government institutions and access public services.

The JAM Trinity—Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile—has become the cornerstone of India's digital governance architecture. By integrating financial inclusion, biometric identification, and mobile technology, the government has successfully streamlined welfare delivery and reduced corruption.

The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has revolutionised digital payments, making India a global leader in digital financial transactions. Today, millions of citizens use UPI for everyday payments, contributing to financial inclusion and economic transparency. India's digital payment ecosystem has become a model for several countries seeking to modernise their financial systems.

Digital governance has extended beyond payments. Online platforms for taxation, business registration, passport services, healthcare, education, and grievance redressal have enhanced administrative efficiency and citizen convenience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, digital platforms played a crucial role in ensuring continuity of governance and public service delivery.

The expansion of broadband connectivity and internet access has also helped bridge the digital divide. Rural communities increasingly benefit from digital services, online education, telemedicine, and e-governance initiatives, thereby promoting inclusive development.

Economic Reforms and the Vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat

Economic reforms have played a pivotal role in shaping India's growth trajectory over the last twelve years. The government has pursued policies aimed at enhancing competitiveness, attracting investment, encouraging entrepreneurship, and promoting innovation.

The implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) represented one of the most significant tax reforms in independent India. By creating a unified national market, GST simplified taxation and improved ease of doing business.

Programs such as Make in India, Startup India, Skill India, and Stand-Up India have encouraged entrepreneurship and employment generation. India's startup ecosystem has witnessed remarkable growth, with thousands of startups contributing to innovation, technological advancement, and job creation.

The concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) has emerged as a central pillar of economic policy. Through Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, the government has encouraged domestic manufacturing in sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, automobiles, and defence production.

Despite global economic uncertainties, India has maintained its position as one of the fastest-growing major economies. The country's economic resilience reflects strong macroeconomic management, expanding infrastructure, technological innovation, and increasing investor confidence.

Social Welfare and Inclusive Growth

The Modi government's governance philosophy places considerable emphasis on social welfare and inclusive development. Numerous schemes have been launched to improve the quality of life of vulnerable and marginalised sections of society.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana has helped millions of families realise the dream of owning a house. Ayushman Bharat has emerged as one of the world's largest public healthcare programs, providing health insurance coverage to economically weaker sections.

The Ujjwala Yojana has empowered women by providing access to clean cooking fuel, thereby improving health outcomes and reducing household pollution. Similarly, the Jal Jeevan Mission has expanded access to safe drinking water in rural households, contributing to better health and sanitation.

PM-KISAN has provided direct income support to farmers, while agricultural reforms and technological interventions have sought to enhance productivity and improve rural livelihoods. The Swachh Bharat Mission has transformed sanitation infrastructure and promoted behavioural change regarding cleanliness and hygiene. These welfare initiatives reflect a governance model that seeks not merely to provide assistance but to empower citizens and create opportunities for long-term socio-economic advancement.

Women's Empowerment and Social Transformation

Women's empowerment has been a major priority during the last twelve years. Government initiatives have focused on financial inclusion, education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and social security for women. Schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have promoted gender equality and female education. The expansion of self-help groups, Mudra loans, and entrepreneurship programs has encouraged women's economic participation.

Improved access to sanitation facilities, clean cooking fuel, and healthcare services has positively impacted the lives of millions of women. These initiatives have contributed to greater dignity, safety, and empowerment. The increasing representation of women in public life and policy discourse reflects broader societal changes supported by government interventions aimed at gender-inclusive development.

National Security and Strategic Strength

National security has remained a key priority under the Modi government. Significant efforts have been made to modernise defence capabilities, strengthen border infrastructure, and enhance strategic preparedness.

The government's proactive approach to security challenges has demonstrated a commitment to safeguarding national interests. Investments in indigenous defence manufacturing align with the

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The restoration of heritage sites, promotion of spiritual tourism, and celebration of India's cultural diversity have contributed to strengthening India's soft power.

broader vision of self-reliance and strategic autonomy. Border infrastructure projects, modernisation of armed forces, and enhanced coordination among security agencies have strengthened India's defence capabilities. The emphasis on technological innovation in defence and cybersecurity has further enhanced national security preparedness. The government's approach has sought to create a secure environment necessary for economic development and social progress.

India's Rising Global Standing

India's foreign policy has witnessed unprecedented dynamism over the past twelve years. Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India has emerged as a more influential and proactive global actor. The country has strengthened strategic partnerships with major powers while maintaining its commitment to strategic autonomy. India's leadership during the G20 Presidency highlighted its growing diplomatic influence and ability to shape global conversations.

Through initiatives such as Vaccine Maitri, India demonstrated its commitment to global solidarity and humanitarian assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The country's active engagement with the Global South has reinforced its image as a voice for developing nations.

India's participation in international organisations, climate negotiations, and economic forums reflects its increasing role in shaping global governance. Today, India is widely recognised as a responsible stakeholder in addressing global challenges related to health, climate change, technology, and sustainable development.

Cultural Renaissance and Civilisational Pride

An important aspect of the past twelve years has been the emphasis on preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage. The government has undertaken various initiatives to conserve historical monuments, promote indigenous knowledge systems, and celebrate India's civilisational legacy.

The global recognition of Yoga through the

International Day of Yoga has significantly enhanced India's cultural influence worldwide. Efforts to promote traditional arts, languages, and cultural practices have strengthened national identity and pride.

The restoration of heritage sites, promotion of spiritual tourism, and celebration of India's cultural diversity have contributed to strengthening India's soft power. These initiatives underscore the belief that development must be rooted in cultural confidence and civilisational continuity.

Towards Viksit Bharat 2047

As India moves toward the centenary of independence in 2047, the vision of Viksit Bharat serves as a roadmap for future development. The achievements of the last twelve years have laid a strong foundation for realising this ambitious national goal.

The future agenda includes strengthening innovation, expanding manufacturing, enhancing educational quality, promoting green growth, improving healthcare systems, and ensuring sustainable development. The emphasis will remain on creating opportunities for all citizens while preserving social harmony and democratic values.

The journey towards Viksit Bharat requires collaboration among government, private sector, academia, civil society, and citizens. It calls for continued commitment to reforms, innovation, and inclusive development.



The Long Game

Building a Developed India, One Institution at a Time

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The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 goes beyond conventional measures of economic progress. A developed nation is not defined solely by income levels or industrial growth; it is also characterised by strong institutions, broad-based opportunities, social inclusion, quality infrastructure, innovation, human development, environmental sustainability, and a high standard of living.

Accordingly, Viksit Bharat envisages a globally competitive economy supported by modern infrastructure, technological advancement, quality education and healthcare, transparent governance, social inclusion, environmental responsibility, strong national security, and an influential role in global affairs. It seeks to balance economic growth with social welfare and cultural confidence, viewing development not merely as material progress but as the empowerment of citizens and the strengthening of national capabilities.

Transforming a nation of more than 1.4 billion people into a developed country by 2047 is an ambitious undertaking. It requires sustained economic growth, effective institutions, policy continuity, technological innovation, and active public participation. Such a transformation cannot be achieved through short-term measures alone; it demands long-term planning and the gradual creation of the economic, social, and institutional foundations on which future progress can be built.

Economic Foundations for a Developed India

Economic growth is an essential prerequisite for achieving developed-nation status. It creates employment opportunities, raises income, strengthens public finances, and provides the resources needed for investments in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and social welfare. Recognising this, the past decade has seen a sustained effort to strengthen the structural foundations of the Indian economy.

A series of reforms aimed at improving the business environment, expanding financial inclusion, formalising economic activity, and enhancing economic efficiency have sought to increase India's long-term growth potential. The rapid expansion of banking services, digital payments, tax reforms, startup promotion, and investments in manufacturing and other productive sectors reflects an attempt to build a more resilient and diversified economy.

Emphasis has been placed on strengthening domestic capabilities in manufacturing, innovation, and entrepreneurship. For a country aspiring to become a developed nation, sustained progress cannot depend solely on consumption-driven growth. It requires higher productivity, industrial expansion, technological advancement, and globally competitive enterprises capable of generating employment and value addition.

Viewed in this context, many of the economic initiatives undertaken since 2014 can be seen as efforts to enhance India's long-term developmental capacity and prepare the economy for the demands of sustained growth in the decades leading to 2047. **Infrastructure: Building the Physical Foundations of Prosperity**

Infrastructure has long been a key driver of economic development. Roads, railways, ports, airports, power networks, logistics systems, and digital connectivity provide the foundation for productivity, investment, and market integration. In recent years, India has undertaken a major expansion of infrastructure through expressways, economic corridors, dedicated freight corridors, airports, metro networks, ports, inland waterways,

logistics hubs, and rural connectivity programmes. These investments are reshaping the country's economic landscape and improving connectivity across regions. The importance of infrastructure extends beyond transportation. Efficient infrastructure lowers logistics costs, facilitates the movement of goods and people, improves market access, attracts investment, and enhances economic competitiveness.

The PM Gati Shakti initiative aims to coordinate infrastructure planning across sectors and ministries, replacing fragmented approaches with integrated development. Such coordination is essential for improving efficiency and maximising the economic benefits of public investment. As India advances towards the goal of Viksit Bharat 2047, these infrastructure investments are expected to strengthen the foundations for sustained growth, regional integration, and long-term economic development.

Human Capital: Investing in India's Greatest Resource

India's most valuable asset is its people. The success of the Viksit Bharat vision will depend largely on the education, skills, health, and productivity of its citizens. Consequently, human capital development has become a key component of the country's long-term development strategy. Initiatives such as the National Education Policy, the expansion of higher education, skill development programmes, healthcare reforms, and improvements in nutrition and sanitation aim to enhance human capabilities and broaden opportunities.

As the global economy undergoes rapid technological change, education alone is not sufficient. Continuous learning, skill upgradation, and adaptability are increasingly important in a world shaped by automation, artificial intelligence, and evolving labour markets. Health remains equally critical. A productive workforce depends on access to quality healthcare, adequate nutrition, sanitation, and preventive care. Improvements in these areas contribute not only to individual well-being but also to broader economic and social progress.

The extent to which India can develop and effectively utilise its human resources will play a decisive role in determining its developmental trajectory in the decades ahead.

Governance Reforms and State Capacity

Economic resources alone do not guarantee development; effective institutions are equally important. Countries that have successfully achieved developed-nation status have generally been supported by governance systems capable of implementing policies efficiently, delivering public services, ensuring accountability, and responding to changing needs.

A notable feature of recent reforms in India has been the effort to strengthen state capacity through technology-driven administration, greater transparency, and a stronger focus on citizens. Initiatives such as digital governance platforms, direct benefit transfers, real-time monitoring, and data-based decision-making have aimed to improve service delivery, reduce leakages, and enhance administrative efficiency. The significance of these reforms lies in their broader impact. Effective institutions increase the returns on investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and social welfare. They also help build public confidence in government.

Trust remains a critical component of development. Citizens are more likely to participate in and support national initiatives when public institutions are seen as responsive, transparent, and reliable. In this context, strengthening governance systems is an important foundation for India's long-term development and the broader vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Technological Readiness for the Twenty-First Century

Technological capability will be a critical determinant of economic competitiveness in the twenty-first century. Recognizing this reality, India

has increasingly focused on strengthening its technological foundations through investments in Digital Public Infrastructure, digital payments, innovation ecosystems, startups, semiconductor manufacturing, space research, and other emerging technologies.

The importance of technology extends well beyond economic growth. It is reshaping governance, education, healthcare, agriculture, manufacturing, and public service delivery. India's experience with digital public platforms has demonstrated how technology can improve access, efficiency, and inclusion at scale. These developments have enabled India not only to adopt technological innovations but also to contribute solutions that are increasingly relevant to other countries.

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As India moves towards 2047, its development trajectory will remain closely connected with global economic and strategic developments.
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As fields such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum computing, advanced manufacturing, and clean energy continue to transform the global economy, India's capacity to innovate and adapt will play an important role in its development trajectory. Strengthening technological capabilities today is therefore essential to achieving the broader goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Harnessing the Demographic Dividend

India is at a critical demographic juncture, with one of the world's youngest populations and among the largest workforces. This presents a significant opportunity for long-term economic growth, but it also poses important policy challenges.

A young population can become a major driver of development when supported by quality education, market-relevant skills, productive employment, and opportunities for entrepreneurship. Conversely, inadequate investment in human development and job creation can limit the benefits of this demographic advantage. The demographic dividend is therefore not determined by population size alone; it depends on the ability to enhance human capabilities and labour productivity. Initiatives aimed at skill development, entrepreneurship,

innovation, digital literacy, and employment generation are central to this effort. The next two decades will be crucial in determining whether India can translate its favourable demographic profile into sustained economic and social progress. Many of the policy measures introduced since 2014 have sought to strengthen the foundations required for this transition. Ultimately, the success of Viksit Bharat 2047 will depend substantially on how effectively today's young population is equipped to become the country's future workforce, innovators, entrepreneurs, professionals, and leaders.

Public Welfare and Inclusive Development

The vision of Viksit Bharat cannot be achieved if the benefits of development remain limited to a section of society. Inclusive growth is therefore an essential element of long-term national progress. Over the past decade, policy initiatives have focused on expanding access to welfare programmes, financial services, housing, sanitation, healthcare, clean energy, and social protection. The objective has been not only to improve living conditions but also to ensure broader participation in the development process. The importance of these measures extends beyond immediate welfare gains. Better access to basic services strengthens human capabilities, increases economic participation, and contributes to social stability. Recent efforts have also emphasised saturation-based delivery, with the aim of ensuring that eligible beneficiaries are not excluded from essential services. The development idea underlying Viksit Bharat seeks to combine economic growth with social inclusion. In this approach, prosperity and welfare are seen as mutually reinforcing, helping to create a stronger and more equitable foundation for national development.

Long-Term Planning and the Culture of National Missions

A key characteristic of successful developmental states is their ability to pursue long-term goals rather than focus solely on immediate outcomes. The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 reflects this approach by linking present policies with long-term

national objectives. This perspective is evident in major initiatives relating to infrastructure, digital transformation, manufacturing, renewable energy, skill development, urban development, water resources, and innovation. Such programmes are designed not only to address current needs but also to strengthen India's future capabilities.

Long-term planning provides policy continuity, encourages investment, and helps build public support around shared national priorities. Its value is particularly evident in sectors where results emerge gradually. Educational reforms, infrastructure development, technological advancement, and institutional strengthening often require sustained effort over many years before their full benefits become visible. Viewed in this context, the period since 2014 may be seen as the initial phase of a longer developmental journey extending towards the goals envisioned for 2047.

India's Global Role in the Journey to Viksit Bharat

The vision of Viksit Bharat is closely linked with India's engagement with the wider world. Sustained economic growth and national development require access to global markets, investments, technologies, and knowledge networks. India's increasing participation in international forums, expanding economic partnerships, technological capabilities, and growing role among developing countries contribute to its long-term development objectives. At the same time, greater global engagement provides opportunities for trade, innovation, investment, and capacity building.

India's domestic transformation has also strengthened its international standing. Initiatives in areas such as digital governance, infrastructure development, renewable energy, and public service delivery have enhanced the country's credibility and influence in global discussions on development, climate change, technology, and international cooperation. As India moves towards 2047, its development trajectory will remain closely connected with global economic and strategic developments. A stronger presence in international affairs is likely to complement its aspiration to become a developed nation and a leading global power.

Memory, Confidence and Growth

India's Civilisational State in Practice

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The concept of a civilizational state differs from the conventional nation-state model that emerged in Europe during the modern era. A nation-state derives much of its identity from political boundaries, constitutional arrangements, and relatively recent historical experiences. A civilizational state, by contrast, derives its legitimacy from a much longer historical continuum.

India's civilizational experience spans millennia. It encompasses diverse traditions, philosophies, languages, faiths, artistic expressions, and intellectual achievements. Despite political fragmentation at different points in history, a broad civilizational unity persisted through shared cultural symbols, sacred geographies, pilgrimage networks, philosophical traditions, and social interactions.



The contemporary emphasis on India's civilizational identity reflects an effort to reconnect governance with this historical continuity. It suggests that development should not be understood solely in material terms but also in relation to cultural confidence, civilizational memory, and national self-understanding. From this perspective, economic progress and cultural renewal become mutually reinforcing rather than mutually exclusive.

Civilizational Nationalism and the Reimagining of India

One of the defining features of contemporary governance has been the growing prominence of civilisation. Unlike narrow forms of nationalism that rely exclusively on ethnicity or political ideology, civilizational nationalism seeks to derive national confidence from a shared cultural inheritance.

The emphasis on India's ancient knowledge traditions, spiritual heritage, historical achievements, and civilizational contributions reflects this approach. Public discourse increasingly highlights India's role as a cradle of philosophical inquiry, scientific innovation, artistic creativity, and spiritual thought.

This renewed focus has contributed to a broader shift in national psychology. For decades, discussions about India's past often oscillated between selective celebration and colonial-era interpretations that emphasised stagnation or decline. Contemporary narratives seek to present India's history as a source of inspiration and confidence rather than merely a subject of academic study.

The significance of this shift extends beyond symbolism. Nations often draw developmental energy from their collective self-perception. A society that possesses confidence in its civilizational identity may be better positioned to pursue ambitious developmental goals while preserving cultural continuity.

Development Rooted in Cultural Confidence

Economic development and cultural identity are

frequently portrayed as opposing forces. Modernisation is often assumed to require the abandonment of traditional values and institutions. India's recent experience suggests an alternative possibility.

The idea increasingly gaining acceptance is that cultural confidence can itself become a developmental asset. Societies that value their heritage are often better able to mobilise collective participation, preserve social cohesion, and sustain long-term national projects.

This perspective is visible in various initiatives that seek to integrate culture with development. Tourism, heritage conservation, urban renewal, traditional crafts, cultural industries, and spiritual tourism are increasingly viewed not merely as cultural activities but also as engines of economic growth. The underlying message is clear: modernisation need not imply cultural homogenization. India can become technologically advanced and economically prosperous while remaining rooted in its civilizational ethos.

Kashi: A Model of Heritage-Led Development

Perhaps no example better illustrates this synthesis than the transformation of Kashi (Varanasi or Banaras). One of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, Kashi occupies a unique place in India's civilizational imagination. It is simultaneously a sacred city, a centre of learning, a cultural hub, and a living heritage landscape.

For many years, the challenge lay in balancing modernisation with preservation. Urban development often threatened heritage, while heritage conservation sometimes appeared disconnected from contemporary needs. The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor project sought to bridge this divide. Improved infrastructure, enhanced accessibility, conservation initiatives, and urban renewal efforts have transformed the pilgrim experience while preserving the city's cultural character.

The significance of Kashi extends beyond the project itself. It demonstrates how heritage can become an active component of development

rather than an obstacle to it. Cultural assets can generate tourism, employment, investment, and urban revitalisation while strengthening civilizational continuity. Kashi thus represents a model of development that derives strength from history rather than distancing itself from it.

Ayodhya and the Politics of Civilizational Memory

The transformation of Ayodhya occupies an equally important place in contemporary India's civilizational discourse. For many citizens, the construction of the Ram Mandir represents more than religious development. It symbolises the resolution of a long-standing historical and cultural aspiration. The redevelopment of Ayodhya as a modern pilgrimage and cultural centre reflects an effort to integrate spiritual significance with urban planning, tourism development, and infrastructure expansion. From a broader perspective, Ayodhya highlights the role of collective memory in nation-building. Civilisations are sustained not merely through institutions but through shared narratives, symbols, and cultural landmarks.

The redevelopment of Ayodhya demonstrates how places associated with civilizational memory can become centres of both cultural revival and economic activity. Hotels, transportation infrastructure, public amenities, and tourism-related enterprises contribute to local development while enhancing the city's cultural significance. In this sense, Ayodhya illustrates the intersection of civilizational consciousness and developmental planning.

Sacred Geography and National Integration

India's civilizational unity has historically been reinforced by its sacred geography. Pilgrimage routes, rivers, temples, monasteries, shrines, and cultural landscapes created networks that connected diverse regions long before the emergence of modern transportation systems.

Contemporary initiatives aimed at improving pilgrimage infrastructure, preserving cultural sites,

and promoting spiritual tourism reflect an appreciation of this historical reality. Projects associated with Kedarnath, Mahakal Lok, Char Dham connectivity, Kartarpur Corridor, and various heritage circuits illustrate the growing recognition that sacred geography remains an important dimension of national integration.

These initiatives are not merely religious undertakings. They contribute to infrastructure development, tourism growth, employment generation, and regional economic activity. More importantly, they reinforce cultural linkages across diverse parts of the country. In a nation as vast and diverse as India, such cultural networks continue to play a vital integrative role.

Decolonising Public Discourse

Another significant dimension of contemporary governance has been the effort to decolonise public discourse. Colonial rule did not merely affect political institutions; it also influenced systems of knowledge, historical interpretation, cultural hierarchies, and intellectual frameworks. Even after Independence, many aspects of public discourse continued to be shaped by inherited colonial assumptions.

The contemporary emphasis on decolonisation seeks to revisit these frameworks. This includes renewed attention to indigenous perspectives, the recovery of neglected historical narratives, the celebration of local heroes, and the promotion of Indian languages and cultural traditions.

The objective is not to reject global knowledge but to engage with it from a position of intellectual confidence. A decolonised mindset seeks to view India not merely through borrowed frameworks but through categories and experiences rooted in its own civilisation. Such efforts contribute to a broader project of cultural self-respect and national confidence.

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India's experience indicates that economic modernisation can coexist with cultural rootedness. Global integration can occur without civilizational dilution.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Intellectual Self-Reliance

One of the most interesting developments of recent years has been the renewed interest in indigenous knowledge systems. India's intellectual traditions encompass diverse fields including philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, environmental management, linguistics, architecture, and governance. For centuries, these traditions contributed significantly to human knowledge.

Contemporary initiatives have sought to encourage greater engagement with these intellectual resources. The growing recognition of traditional medicine, interest in Indian knowledge systems within educational institutions, and discussions surrounding sustainable practices rooted in indigenous traditions reflect this trend. Importantly, the objective is not to romanticise the past or reject scientific inquiry. Rather, it is to encourage dialogue between traditional wisdom and modern knowledge. Such an approach aligns with the broader vision of intellectual self-reliance, where India contributes to global knowledge not merely as a consumer but also as a producer.

Tradition and Modernity in Governance

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of India's recent transformation is the attempt to reconcile tradition and modernity. Historically, these concepts were often portrayed as opposites. Traditional societies were expected to modernise by abandoning older identities and institutions. India's contemporary experience suggests a different possibility.

Digital governance coexists with cultural revival. Infrastructure expansion occurs alongside heritage conservation. Space missions and technological innovation advance together with renewed interest in ancient knowledge traditions. Smart cities emerge alongside efforts to preserve sacred landscapes. This coexistence reflects a uniquely Indian developmental vision. Modernity is not viewed as imitation but as adaptation. Progress does not require cultural amnesia. The resulting model seeks to combine technological sophistication with civilizational continuity, economic growth with cultural confidence, and

global engagement with national identity.

India and the Emergence of a Distinct Developmental Model

The broader significance of these developments lies in the emergence of a distinct Indian developmental model. For much of the twentieth century, developmental debates were dominated by Western experiences. Nations were often expected to follow predefined pathways toward modernisation. Contemporary India increasingly suggests that development can follow multiple trajectories.

India's experience indicates that economic modernisation can coexist with cultural rootedness. Global integration can occur without civilizational dilution. Technological advancement can complement rather than undermine traditional identities. This model remains a work in progress rather than a completed project. Nevertheless, it represents an important contribution to global debates on development, identity, and modernisation.



Digital Public Infrastructure & Democratic Governance

Digital Public Infrastructure as a New Model of Governance

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The Emergence of Digital Public Infrastructure

The concept of Digital Public Infrastructure represents a significant departure from traditional approaches to digitisation. In many countries, digital systems evolved in fragmented ways, with separate platforms for identity, payments, banking, and government services. Such fragmentation often limited efficiency and accessibility.

India adopted a different approach. Instead of creating isolated digital solutions, it gradually developed interoperable public digital platforms that could work together. These platforms function much like physical infrastructure. Just as roads enable transportation and electricity enable industrial activity, digital infrastructure enables participation in the modern economy and governance system. The objective was not merely technological modernisation. It was to create a digital foundation that could support financial inclusion, welfare delivery, entrepreneurship, innovation, and citizen empowerment.

This vision reflects a broader understanding of development. In the twenty-first century, access to digital infrastructure is increasingly becoming as important as access to physical infrastructure. Connectivity, identity, and digital transactions now play a central role in economic and social participation.

JAM Trinity: Building the Foundations of Digital Inclusion

At the heart of India's digital transformation lies the JAM Trinity: JAN DHAN accounts, AADHAAR identification, and MOBILE connectivity. Each of these components addresses a specific developmental challenge. Jan Dhan promotes financial inclusion by connecting citizens to the formal banking system. Aadhaar provides a unique digital identity. Mobile connectivity enables communication and access to digital services. Individually, each initiative is important. Collectively, they form a powerful governance architecture.

Historically, welfare delivery often suffered from duplication, delays, leakages, and exclusion. Many citizens lacked bank accounts, making direct transfers difficult. Identity verification processes were cumbersome and prone to inefficiencies. The integration of Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile connectivity created a framework capable of addressing these challenges. Citizens could now be identified more accurately, receive benefits directly, and interact with government systems more efficiently.

The JAM architecture represents one of the largest experiments in digital inclusion anywhere in the world. Its significance lies not only in technological innovation but also in its developmental impact. By connecting millions of previously excluded individuals to formal financial and administrative systems, it has helped democratize access to state services.

Aadhaar and the Transformation of Governance

The Aadhaar system occupies a central place in India's digital governance ecosystem. As the world's largest biometric identity platform, it has fundamentally altered the way public services are

delivered. Identity has always been a critical component of governance. Access to welfare benefits, financial services, educational opportunities, and public programmes often depend upon reliable identification mechanisms. In the absence of such mechanisms, exclusion and inefficiency become difficult to avoid.

Aadhaar sought to address this challenge by providing a portable, verifiable, and scalable identity system. Its significance extends beyond identity verification. It has enabled the creation of a digital ecosystem in which citizens can authenticate themselves across multiple services and institutions. From opening bank accounts and receiving subsidies to accessing welfare programmes and digital services, Aadhaar has become an important enabling platform.

Critics and supporters have debated various aspects of its implementation, reflecting the vibrancy of India's democratic discourse. Yet few would dispute its transformative impact on the architecture of governance. The system demonstrates how digital identity can enhance administrative efficiency while expanding access to public services.

Direct Benefit Transfers: Technology and Transparency

One of the most visible applications of Digital Public Infrastructure has been the expansion of Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT). Traditional welfare systems often involved multiple intermediaries, increasing the risk of delays and leakages. The combination of Aadhaar authentication, Jan Dhan accounts, and digital connectivity enabled a more direct relationship between the state and the citizen.

Benefits could be transferred directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts, improving transparency and accountability. The significance of DBT extends beyond financial savings. It reflects a broader transformation in governance philosophy. Citizens increasingly interact with government systems through transparent digital mechanisms rather than complex bureaucratic processes. The result is a governance model that emphasises efficiency, dignity, and accessibility.

The COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated the value of this digital architecture. The ability to transfer assistance rapidly to millions of citizens highlighted the resilience and scalability of India's digital systems.

The UPI Revolution: Democratizing Digital Payments

If Aadhaar transformed identity, UPI transformed payments. The Unified Payments Interface has emerged as one of the most successful digital payment systems in the world. Designed as an interoperable, open platform, UPI allows individuals, businesses, and institutions to transfer money instantly via mobile devices.

What makes UPI particularly remarkable is its inclusiveness. Digital payments were once associated primarily with affluent consumers and advanced economies. UPI democratised digital transactions by making them accessible to ordinary citizens, small businesses, street vendors, and rural users.

The platform has dramatically reduced transaction costs, improved convenience, and encouraged financial formalisation. Small entrepreneurs can now receive payments digitally without the need for expensive infrastructure. Consumers can transact seamlessly across banks and applications. From tea vendors and vegetable sellers to e-commerce platforms and multinational businesses, UPI has become part of everyday economic life.

Globally, few digital payment systems have achieved comparable scale while remaining interoperable and accessible. UPI illustrates how public digital infrastructure can stimulate innovation while serving broader developmental objectives.

Digital Service Delivery and Citizen-Centric Governance

The success of Digital Public Infrastructure is not measured solely by technological achievements but

by its impact on citizens. Over the past decade, government services have increasingly migrated to digital platforms. Applications, certificates, licenses, tax filings, utility payments, educational services, and grievance redressal mechanisms are now accessible online.

This transformation has reduced geographical and administrative barriers. Citizens living in remote areas can access services without travelling long distances. Processes that once required multiple visits to government offices can now often be completed digitally.

The implications for governance are significant. Digital platforms improve transparency, reduce discretionary decision-making, and enhance administrative responsiveness. More importantly, they contribute to the democratisation of public services by making them more accessible to diverse sections of society.

Digital Inclusion and Rural Connectivity

A common criticism of digital transformation globally is that it can deepen existing inequalities if access remains uneven. India's digital strategy has therefore placed considerable emphasis on inclusion.

The expansion of mobile connectivity, broadband infrastructure, Common Service Centres, and digital literacy initiatives has sought to ensure that the benefits of technology are not confined to urban elites.

Rural India has become an important arena of digital transformation. Farmers access market information through digital platforms. Students participate in online learning. Women engage with financial services through mobile technologies. Rural entrepreneurs connect with customers beyond local markets.

Digital inclusion is therefore not merely a technological objective; it is a social and developmental imperative. The broader significance lies in reducing what economists call "access

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India's approach demonstrates that digital infrastructure can be designed to promote inclusion, innovation, and democratic participation simultaneously.
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inequality.” Technology becomes meaningful when it expands opportunities for those previously excluded.

Open Digital Ecosystems: Innovation without Monopoly

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of India’s Digital Public Infrastructure is its emphasis on openness and interoperability. Many digital ecosystems worldwide are dominated by large private corporations that control access to platforms and user data. India’s approach has increasingly focused on creating open digital networks that enable participation by multiple stakeholders.

UPI, DigiLocker, Account Aggregator frameworks, Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), and other platforms exemplify this philosophy. These systems function as digital public goods. They provide foundational infrastructure upon which businesses, startups, innovators, and service providers can build solutions.

This approach encourages competition, reduces entry barriers, and promotes innovation. Rather than concentrating power within a few platforms, open ecosystems create opportunities for a broader range of participants. The result is a uniquely democratic model of digital development.

India’s Digital Model and the Global South

India’s Digital Public Infrastructure has attracted growing international interest because it addresses challenges common across the developing world. Many countries struggle with issues such as financial exclusion, inefficient welfare delivery, limited administrative capacity, and inadequate digital infrastructure. Traditional solutions often require substantial resources and institutional capabilities.

India’s experience demonstrates that digital platforms can help overcome some of these constraints. By providing scalable, affordable, and interoperable systems, DPI offers an alternative pathway for development. Countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific have expressed interest in learning from India’s digital

experience. International organisations increasingly recognise DPI as a critical component of sustainable development.

In this context, India is not merely exporting technology. It is sharing governance innovations that can help improve service delivery, financial inclusion, and citizen empowerment globally.

Digital Governance as a Global Public Good

The most significant aspect of India’s contribution may be the emergence of Digital Public Infrastructure as a global public good. Traditionally, public goods such as roads, ports, and power systems were understood primarily in physical terms. Today, digital systems are becoming equally important foundations of development.

India’s approach demonstrates that digital infrastructure can be designed to promote inclusion, innovation, and democratic participation simultaneously. It offers a middle path between state-controlled digital systems and purely market-driven digital ecosystems. The global significance of this model lies in its adaptability. Countries with diverse political systems, economic structures, and developmental challenges can draw lessons from different components of India’s experience.

As digital transformation accelerates worldwide, the demand for accessible and inclusive digital governance models is likely to grow. India’s experience positions it as an important contributor to this emerging global conversation.



From Periphery to Pivot

India's Ascent on the World Stage

Nivedita Jain

Intern at the Geojuristoday
Research Foundation

*“India is no longer
a mere participant
in the international
order. It is actively
shaping it.”*

On a September evening in 2023, beneath the chandeliers of Bharat Mandapam, India achieved what no G20 host has ever managed before: it secured the unanimous admission of the African Union as a permanent G20 member. The moment was more than a diplomatic success; it symbolised a broader transformation underway. A nation once described by Henry Kissinger as too large to ignore yet too weak to matter has, in the 21st century, repositioned itself as one of the world's most consequential powers. Dynamic in economy, assertive in military, diplomatically indispensable, and harbouring a magnetic culture; India's rise is not just a perception; India's rise is a solid reality.

Every great-power story begins with economics. In Bharat's case, economic transformation has provided the foundation upon which its strategic ambitions now rest. By 2023, India had surpassed the United Kingdom to become the world's 5th-largest economy, with a GDP of \$3.7 trillion. Not only that, but India is also the world's fastest-growing major economy, averaging 7% GDP growth per annum in recent years, while other major economies struggle to stay above 2-3%. The IMF projects India to become the third-largest economy globally by the 2030s, overtaking Germany and Japan. Moreover, the rollout of India's UPI and its adoption by Singapore, France, Bhutan, Nepal, and the UAE have embedded Indian technological standards into the world's financial architecture.

India's G20 presidency in 2023 showcased its prowess in wielding global focus in its interest, with the government successfully leveraging the platform as a vehicle to project its development philosophy: One Earth, One Family, One Future. India advanced the Global South's interests in debt restructuring, climate finance, and digital public infrastructure, establishing itself in the spirit of being the "Vishwaguru" and thus emerging as a reliable leader for the Global South.

Economic strength may create opportunities, but great powers are ultimately judged by their ability to protect their interests. Here too, the country's trajectory has undergone transformation. Today, India is the world's third-largest military spender, with a defence budget exceeding \$93.5 billion in 2026-27. More important than spending is the direction of that spending: towards modernisation. India has invested significantly in the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative in defence, which has led to the commissioning of INS Vikrant in 2022, India's first indigenously built aircraft carrier; the development of the Agni-V intercontinental ballistic missile; and the expansion of India's nuclear submarine program. India today is a power no longer content

to buy its security from foreign powers.

The decisive 2016 surgical strikes across the LOC in Pakistan and the 2019 Balakot strikes represented a decisive approach shift - from strategic restraint to calibrated compellence. In the words of former NSA Shivshankar Menon, India demonstrated a new 'redline calculus' that departed from decades of 'absorptive patience'. The 2020 Galwan clash and the swift military response in occupying key peaks of the Kailash Range showed firmness in standing our ground, no matter the competitor. Operation Sindoor demonstrated that India now possesses both the confidence and capability to shape its security environment rather than merely reacting to it.

If hard power is the spine of India's global stature, soft power is its heart. The UN's adoption of June 21 as the International Day of Yoga, as proposed by PM Narendra Modi in 2014, and its observance by over 300 million people across 177 countries represent India's soft power potential on a global scale.

Under his leadership, India projected its ancient traditions abroad through Buddhism diplomacy, Ayurveda, Sanskrit studies, and Indian classical arts. India's Vaccine Maitri during Covid-19 led to more than 90 countries receiving Indian made vaccines, establishing India yet again as the 'pharmacy of the world'. The Indian diaspora too, the heart of India's soft power, has become a hallmark of Indian diplomacy. Large diaspora events like "Howdy Modi" in Houston, Madison Square Garden event in New York City, and community engagements across Europe, Australia, and the Gulf increased the Indian community's visibility and political influence. Several countries, including the US and Australia, returned stolen Indian antiquities. They do not come alone; they also make the world aware of India's cultural heritage and its civilisational continuity, undoing the effects of centuries of colonial subjugation.

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*India's rise is
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 matters is that we
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 the rise of all.*

When Chandrayaan-3 touched down near the Moon's South Pole, the moment resonated far beyond the scientific community. It symbolised a developing nation's ability to achieve what even advanced powers had failed to accomplish. Chandrayaan-3 became a symbol of ambition for the developing world: what one developing nation can do, another can too.

India attracted over 9.02 million foreign tourists in 2025, with speculation that Ayodhya alone could draw 50 million international visitors by 2030. The redevelopment of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor and the Mahakal Lok attracted tourists back to India. Through Swadesh Darshan, India welcomed foreign tourists for thematic tourism. Most people visit India to bathe in its spirituality; some find it the destination for the best blend of spices; and some find themselves while discovering India.

Perhaps India's most significant diplomatic achievement in the 21st century is the reinvention of non-alignment in a multi-polar world. The Non-Alignment of the Nehru-Bandung era tilted towards Moscow; Non-Alignment 2.0 is the strategic engagement of the modern era. It is engaging with multiple powers simultaneously, as suits India's national interest. The India of today has finally learnt Kautilyan statecraft; it puts national interest at the forefront.

The war in Ukraine emerged as an excellent example of India's manoeuvre. As Western nations crumbled under US pressure to marshal unprecedented sanctions on Russia, India stood its ground. Not only did it refuse to condemn Moscow at the UNSC, but it also imported discounted Russian crude oil at volumes that tripled between 2022 and 2023. At the same time, it continued to provide humanitarian aid to Ukraine, maintained its strategic dialogue with Washington, and actively participated in QUAD exercises.

Some call India a fence-sitter; New Delhi calls it strategic autonomy. The outcome speaks for itself: India has maintained productive relations with Russia, shakes hands with the US, has dinner with the EU, and opens its arms for Israel and the Arab world. When the world is struggling to choose

sides, India has chosen a strategy: to navigate the turbulent geopolitics on its own terms.

India has always positioned itself as the diplomatic voice of the developing world, a role that combines genuine ideological commitment with geopolitical calculations. The Voice of the Global South Summit, hosted by India in 2023 and again in 2024, brought together 125 developing nations to formulate a common agenda on climate finance, debt relief, food security, and access to technology, presenting a united face to the world to demand its rightful place.

India's relationships are neither built on cheque-book diplomacy nor on security alliances; they are built on trust and common goals, a commitment to stand for each other. This was visible in our COVID response, disaster relief operations, and UN peacekeeping missions. India demands a permanent seat at the UNSC today, not just for itself, but to negotiate on the global stage for the Global South, and that is why the whole Global South stands with India in its demand.

In today's multipolar world, India is a power large enough to matter, independent enough to refuse subordination, and powerful enough to decide its own course. It is not seeking to rule over all; it is not trying to dominate. As the saintly philosopher Sri Aurobindo said, the universal spirit, which began its journey from India and gave civilisation to the world, is returning to India today. India's rise is unstoppable; what matters is that we hold each other's hands and resolutely stand behind our leadership, ensuring the rise of all.

India's rise is written in data, doctrine, and perception; it is echoed on the diplomatic stage and reflected in people's hearts. Today, the nation stands at a historic crossroads. No longer at the periphery but a pivotal state whose choices will shape regional stability and the aspirations of the developing world.

Think about where India stood in 2013. The rupee was collapsing. Global rating agencies were clubbing us with Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, and Turkey, calling us one of the "Fragile Five." In Delhi, the phrase "policy paralysis" had stopped being an accusation and become a simple description. Nothing moved. Nothing got decided.

Fast forward twelve years. India is the world's fifth-largest economy. We have a rover on the Moon. Farmers in remote Mizoram board electrified trains. A woman in a UP village holds a title deed to her own home. These are not coincidences. They are the result of a decade of sustained, deliberate work under Prime Minister Narendra Modi work that was often unglamorous, frequently contested, but ultimately transformative.

Fragile Five to Fifth Largest

A Decade That Rewrote India's Story

Santhati Srinavya

BJYM State Secretary, Andhra Pradesh



One Nation, One Market

For decades, moving goods across Indian state borders felt like crossing into a foreign country. Different tax rates, different forms, different checkpoints. A truck driver knew to keep a thick folder of paperwork on the dashboard.

The Goods and Services Tax, rolled out in 2017, ended that. Every state gave up a slice of its taxation authority for something bigger a genuine national market. It was politically bruising to push through. Small traders struggled in the early months. Critics were loud. But the foundation was right, and the results followed. Monthly GST collections today touch ₹2.42 lakh crore. That number reflects not just a growing economy but a culture of compliance that simply did not exist before.

Around the same time, the Production Linked Incentive schemes began rewarding companies not for setting up shop but for actually producing. The difference sounds small. The impact was not. Across pharmaceuticals, electronics, solar panels, and battery cells, India started making things it used to import. Over ₹20 lakh crore in production output. Roughly 14 lakh new jobs. India is now the world's second-largest mobile phone manufacturer a

sentence that would have seemed absurd in 2014.

Banking the Unbankable

Here is a number worth sitting with: before 2014, roughly half of India had no bank account. No savings account, no way to receive a government payment directly, no formal financial identity whatsoever.

The Jan Dhan Yojana set out to fix that. Combined with Aadhaar for identity and mobile phones for access, what became known as the JAM trinity, it created something India had never had: a direct line between the government and every citizen. No middlemen. No commissions quietly pocketed along the way.

There is an old estimate that of every rupee the government sent out in welfare, only fifteen paise reached the person it was meant for. Direct Benefit Transfer changed that equation entirely. Today, over 58 crore Jan Dhan accounts exist. Most of them belong to people who were, for their entire lives before this, invisible to the formal economy.

On top of this, 5G coverage reached 99.6% of India's districts within just 22 months of launch. BharatNet has laid 7.22 lakh kilometres of optical fibre into rural India. The internet is no longer a privilege of cities. It is infrastructure, like roads and electricity, and it is being built that way.

The Northeast Gets Its Due

There is a particular kind of neglect that does not come from malice but from habit. For decades, the northeastern states were the habit acknowledged on maps, mentioned in speeches, and quietly left to manage with inadequate roads, minimal rail service, and a chronic sense of being an afterthought.

That changed. Over ₹47,270 crore was invested in road construction in the region under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, adding 46,290 kilometres of rural roads. Eight new airports opened, bringing the total from 9 to 17. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, and Mizoram states, which were barely touched by the national rail grid, are now fully electrified.



What does this mean on the ground? It means a farmer's produce reaches a market before it spoils. It means a student does not have to leave the region to find opportunity. It means the Northeast is no longer peripheral; it is connected.

Welfare That Lasts

Old-style welfare in India was often about preventing the worst. A small cash transfer here, a subsidised grain ration there. Enough to keep people from falling completely, but not enough to actually lift them.

The shift over the last twelve years has been toward welfare that builds something permanent. The clearest example is housing. Over 4 crore pucca (solid, brick-and-mortar) homes were built and handed over to rural families under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Not shanties. Not temporary shelters. Real homes. And in most cases, the title was registered in the woman's name. In villages where women rarely owned anything, this change will have consequences felt for generations.

Ayushman Bharat brought health coverage of ₹5 lakh per family to people who previously had one healthcare strategy: avoid getting seriously ill, because the bills would destroy the family. Over 10.82 crore hospital treatments have happened under this scheme, cashless, in real hospitals. The Jan Aushadhi Kendras sell generic medicines at prices that make treatment actually affordable. For a diabetic in a small town, that is not a policy outcome. That is survival.

Meanwhile, 81 crore Indians received free food grains under PMGKAY during years of global inflation and supply disruptions. The world's food prices spiked. India's poor did not go hungry because of it.

Twelve Years That Rewrote the Ceiling

The numbers are striking on their own. Fifth-largest

economy. 400-space startups, where there were fewer than 5. Chandrayaan-3 on the lunar South Pole, a place no other country had reached. A formal tax base grown from 6.9 crore to 9.2 crore filers. National investments now flowing into semiconductors, quantum computing, and commercial space. But the deeper change is harder to put in a table. It is the change in what Indians believe is possible.

Twelve years ago, "world-class" was something that happened elsewhere. Today, India's digital payment infrastructure is being studied and replicated by other nations. Our COVID vaccination campaign was the largest in human history. Our space programme lands where others have not.

Prime Minister Modi's tenure has not just improved India's rankings; it has shifted India's reference point. We are no longer measuring ourselves against our own past and feeling grateful for small progress. We are measuring ourselves against the world and finding that we belong in that conversation.

The road to Viksit Bharat by 2047 is long. But it is no longer imaginary.

Twelve years of consistent, purposeful leadership have made it real, and the India that emerges from this era will carry that foundation for the rest of the century.

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10 Crore Connections

How Ujjwala Transformed Rural Women's Lives at Scale

Shantanu Deepak

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an Intern at the
Geojuristoday Research
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For decades, rural development in India was measured mostly by hard infrastructure roads built, electricity poles erected, and buildings constructed. However, true social progress sits much closer to the ground, inside the daily lives of ordinary citizens. Since 2014, national policy has undergone a quiet but deliberate shift toward direct welfare, putting women at the centre of the governance agenda. The goal has been to address the structural inequalities that trap women in cycles of unpaid, hazardous labour before they can even think about participating in public or economic life.

At the heart of this strategy is the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, introduced in May 2016. The scheme set an ambitious initial target to deliver deposit-free LPG connections to 8 crore households by 2020. Not only was this milestone achieved ahead of schedule, but by 2025, the network expanded to cover over 10 crore households. By ensuring that every single connection is registered under the name of the woman of the household, the initiative did something vital- it turned a basic kitchen utility into a tool for financial identity and domestic decision-making. As India maps out its path toward Vision 2047, this quiet kitchen revolution is laying the groundwork for a healthier, more equitable society.



The incredible expansion of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is a core milestone in the twelve years of transformative governance under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. What began as a local public health intervention in 2016 has evolved into a global case study in sustainable development, fundamentally reshaping how the international community views India's execution capabilities. By scaling up to over 10 crore connections, the initiative has caught the attention of major global bodies, proving that a developing nation can successfully pull off massive, clean-energy transitions at an unprecedented scale.

To understand why a cooking gas cylinder matters so much, you have to look at the reality it replaced. For generations, the traditional rural hearth relied entirely on solid biomass firewood, crop residue, and dried cow dung. While often romanticised in popular culture, the reality of cooking over a traditional mud stove is a severe, daily assault on a woman's body. Working for hours in poorly ventilated spaces means constantly breathing in a thick blanket of trapped smoke.

The medical consequences of this exposure are immediate and cumulative. Women working under these conditions suffer routinely from chronic headaches and painful skin inflammation caused by direct heat. Over the years, this constant inhalation of fine particles causes permanent damage, leading to both chronic and acute respiratory diseases. Because young children often sit near their mothers while they cook, they are forced to breathe the same toxic air, damaging their health early in life. Switching to clean-burning LPG instantly alters this environment, clearing the air and returning physical well-being to the household. Moreover, the dangers of relying on solid biomass are not contained within the four walls of the kitchen. Gathering enough fuel to cook three meals a day requires rural women to travel long distances on foot into local forests and isolated areas. These daily treks demand immense physical labour, often leading to severe back strain,

joint injuries, and constant exposure to extreme heat or monsoon weather.

There is a harsher social reality to this chore as well. Isolated terrain leaves women highly vulnerable to safety risks and personal harassment. For generations, this was a risk woman simply had to accept to keep their households running. Bringing a reliable fuel source directly into the home removes the need for these hazardous journeys entirely. It replaces fear and vulnerability with a basic sense of security and personal dignity, ensuring that no woman has to risk her safety just to feed her family.

One of the most immediate changes brought by clean energy is the sudden return of time. Searching for wood and a fire to burn can consume three to five hours every single day. When an LPG stove is introduced, that entire chunk of the day is suddenly freed up. Time that was once lost to exhausting labour is handed back to the women. Across rural India, this reclaimed time is being turned into local economic power. Women are using these extra hours to organise self-help groups, pool small amounts of savings, and start community businesses. In many villages, these groups have grown into small-scale enterprises that process local agricultural goods, weave textiles, make handicrafts, or run village shops. By turning saved hours into independent income, women are helping lift their families out of subsistence living.

This economic shift is reinforced by the scheme's structure. Because the LPG account is linked directly to the woman's name, government subsidies flow straight into her bank account. This arrangement has brought millions of rural women into the formal banking system for the first time. Having control over this money shifts the traditional power balance within the family, giving women a decisive voice in how the household budget is spent, particularly on their children's education and medical needs.

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The impact of this transition extends far beyond individual households, creating positive changes for the environment and the local economy that align with the goals of Vision 2047. Decades of heavy reliance on firewood put immense pressure on local forests and green cover. Constant depletion of landscapes, accelerated soil erosion, and disrupted local ecosystems. Stepping away from firewood lets the land heal. As millions of families switch to cooking gas, local forests are left undisturbed, allowing saplings to grow, topsoil to stabilise, and natural ecosystems to recover. This landscape recovery is a crucial step in helping rural areas build resilience against changing climate patterns.

At the same time, International institutions like the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) have openly praised the scheme. They recognise it not merely as an energy subsidy, but as a deeply impactful social and economic triumph that directly addresses global climate goals and health standards. By systematically reducing reliance on firewood, India has demonstrated a practical, grassroots blueprint for reducing its carbon footprint and curbing black carbon emissions in rural areas.

A major reason for this global success is the continuous expansion of the on-the-ground distribution network. To ensure that clean fuel actually reaches the remotest households, Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have aggressively commissioned new LPG distributorships. Between April 2016 and October 2024 alone, OMCs established 7,959 new distributorships across the country, with an overwhelming 93% (7,373 distributors) serving rural areas. Looking at the larger picture, the total number of LPG distributors nationwide has nearly doubled, growing from 13,896 in 2014 to 25,481 by 2024, an 83% increase. Crucially, dedicated rural distributors saw an impressive 161% jump, rising from 6,724 to 17,560 over the same decade.

This massive logistical backbone, paired with targeted government subsidies, has completely changed the consistency with which rural families

use clean energy. Rather than treating the gas cylinder as a one-time luxury, beneficiaries are steadily making it a permanent part of their daily lives. This shift is clearly reflected in the rising per-capita consumption figures among Ujjwala families. In the 2019-20 financial year, the average beneficiary used 3.01 of the standard 14.2 kg cylinders annually. By the 2023-24 financial year, that number climbed to 3.95, and by March 2025, it reached a new high of 4.43 cylinders per year, proving that affordable access is translating into lasting, healthy habits for rural households.

The Ujjwala Yojana is ultimately much more than an energy subsidy or a kitchen upgrade. It is a targeted intervention that breaks down the interconnected barriers of poor health, physical insecurity, and lost time that have held rural women back for generations.

This global recognition has significantly elevated India's soft power and prestige on the world stage. It repositions the nation from being a passive participant in climate discussions to an active leader in sensible, human-centric environmental policy. As India progresses toward its Vision 2047 goals, Ujjwala stands as a shining example of how targeted domestic welfare can build a healthier, more self-reliant population while simultaneously establishing a global benchmark for sustainable progress.

As India builds toward its centenary of independence in 2047, the strength of the nation depends on the health, education, and independence of its people. By protecting the health of mothers, safeguarding young girls, unlocking local economic potential, and allowing the environment to recover, clean cooking fuel provides the firm, practical foundation needed for a fairer, more sustainable, self-reliant future.

Mapping New India

How Geography Became a Tool of Governance

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For much of the post-Independence period, India's development strategy was guided largely by sector-specific priorities. Considerable progress was made in agriculture, industry, education, and infrastructure. Yet regional imbalances persisted, with some areas benefiting more from investment, connectivity, and economic opportunities than others.



In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that development challenges vary across regions and cannot be addressed through a uniform approach. The needs of a tribal district in central India are different from those of a border village in the Himalayas, a coastal community, or a rapidly expanding industrial town. This understanding has encouraged a more place-sensitive approach to governance, one that seeks to align national goals with local realities.

The significance of this shift lies in its emphasis on territorial development rather than the mere allocation of resources. Increasing attention is being paid to the specific factors that shape regional development, including geography, infrastructure, demographic characteristics, and connectivity. The objective is not only to extend government programmes to underserved areas but also to create conditions that enable regions to realise their own economic and social potential.

Viewed from this perspective, geography is no longer seen simply as a challenge to be overcome. It is increasingly regarded as an important factor in development planning and a potential source of regional strength. Such an approach reflects a broader effort to make development more balanced, inclusive, and responsive to India's diverse geographical realities.

Aspirational Districts: Bridging India's Internal Development Divide

Few initiatives illustrate this approach more clearly than the Aspirational Districts Programme. For decades, several districts across India continued to lag behind national averages despite repeated policy interventions. Weak health and education indicators, inadequate infrastructure, limited economic opportunities, and administrative constraints often combined to perpetuate regional disparities.

The Aspirational Districts Programme sought to address these challenges through a different governance framework. Instead of focusing primarily on deficiencies, it emphasized improvement, performance, and measurable outcomes. Districts were assessed on key indicators

relating to health, nutrition, education, agriculture, financial inclusion, and basic infrastructure. Regular monitoring and comparative evaluation encouraged greater administrative responsiveness and innovation.

From a geographical standpoint, the programme represents a deliberate effort to reduce regional development imbalances. It recognises that national progress cannot be fully achieved when large parts of the country remain excluded from its benefits.

Equally significant was its emphasis on local-level governance. District administrations were encouraged to identify local priorities, adapt implementation strategies, and improve service delivery within a broad national framework. This strengthened districts' role as active participants in the development process rather than as mere implementing agencies.

The wider significance of the programme lies in its attempt to bring historically underdeveloped regions into the mainstream of India's growth story, thereby contributing to a more balanced and inclusive pattern of development.

PM Gati Shakti and the New Geography of Connectivity

Infrastructure has been one of the most visible features of India's development trajectory since 2014. However, its significance extends far beyond the construction of roads, railways, airports, and ports. Infrastructure provides the framework through which people, goods, services, and ideas move across space. It influences investment decisions, expands market access, reduces transaction costs, and shapes patterns of regional development.

The PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan has introduced a more integrated approach to infrastructure planning. By bringing together multiple ministries and sectors on a common geospatial platform, it seeks to improve coordination and ensure that infrastructure projects complement one another rather than develop in isolation.

The importance of this initiative lies not only in administrative efficiency but also in its wider developmental implications. Expressways connect production centers with consumption markets, freight corridors improve the movement of goods, airports enhance regional accessibility, and logistics hubs strengthen supply chains. At the same time, digital infrastructure is expanding economic participation by connecting remote areas with wider networks of opportunity.

These developments are gradually reshaping India's economic geography. Growth is no longer confined to a few metropolitan regions. Industrial corridors, logistics clusters, and emerging urban centres are creating new nodes of economic activity across the country.

In this sense, the impact of PM Gati Shakti is not merely infrastructural. It is transforming the spatial foundations of development by improving connectivity, reducing geographical barriers, and creating new opportunities for regions that were once considered peripheral to the national economy.

Border Villages: From Peripheral Settlements to Strategic Frontiers

One of the most significant policy shifts of recent years has been the renewed focus on India's border regions. For decades, many border villages remained isolated from mainstream development due to difficult terrain, inadequate infrastructure, limited economic opportunities, and persistent outmigration. Located at the country's geographical margins, these settlements often received less attention than areas closer to major urban and economic centres.

This perception has gradually changed. Through initiatives such as the Vibrant Villages Programme, border communities are increasingly being integrated into the broader development agenda. Investments in roads, telecommunications, housing, tourism facilities, renewable energy, and local livelihoods aim not only to improve living conditions but also to create sustainable economic opportunities in frontier regions.

The change is also conceptual. Border villages are no longer viewed merely as remote settlements at



the edge of the nation; they are increasingly recognised as important gateways of national presence, connectivity, and engagement. Strengthening these communities contributes both to local development and to the broader objective of national integration.

From a geographical perspective, this represents a notable reorientation of development priorities. Areas once considered peripheral are being incorporated more fully into national economic and infrastructural networks. Such efforts help reduce regional disparities, strengthen territorial cohesion, and encourage population retention in strategically important locations.

The experience of border development illustrates a broader principle of contemporary governance: balanced national development requires the inclusion of regions that have historically remained outside the mainstream of economic growth and public investment.

Northeast India: From Isolation to Connectivity

Few regions reflect India's changing development landscape as clearly as the Northeast. Owing to difficult terrain, limited connectivity, and its location on the country's periphery, the region remained relatively isolated from major centres of economic activity for many decades.

During the past decade, considerable investments have been made in roads, bridges, railways, airports, digital networks, and inland water transport. These initiatives have improved physical connectivity, reduced travel time, expanded access to markets, encouraged tourism, and strengthened links between the Northeastern states and the rest of the country.

The region's strategic importance has also acquired renewed attention. Under the Act East Policy, the Northeast is increasingly viewed as India's natural gateway to Southeast Asia rather than as a distant border region. Cross-border connectivity projects,

integrated check posts, and improvements in trade infrastructure have enhanced its role in regional commerce and cooperation.

These developments highlight the extent to which infrastructure and policy interventions can influence regional development. While geography continues to shape opportunities and constraints, improved connectivity can help overcome long-standing barriers to growth.

As a result, the Northeast is gradually emerging from the margins of India's development map to occupy a more central position in the country's economic and strategic vision. Its growing integration with national and international networks represents one of the most significant spatial transformations in contemporary India.

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Better connectivity enhances access to education, healthcare, and public services, promotes social integration, and helps reduce migration driven by the lack of local opportunities.
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Maritime India and the Strategic Significance of Island Territories

For much of the post-Independence period, India's development priorities were shaped largely by continental concerns. In recent years, however, growing recognition of the economic and strategic importance of the maritime domain has brought India's island territories into sharper focus.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep occupy strategically important locations in the Indian Ocean region. Investments in transport infrastructure, digital connectivity, tourism facilities, renewable energy, and port development have improved their integration with the national economy and enhanced their development potential.

These territories also hold considerable strategic value. Situated along major international sea lanes, they strengthen India's maritime presence and support its broader engagement with the Indo-Pacific region. Their location provides important advantages for maritime security, trade connectivity, and regional cooperation.

The increasing emphasis on island development

reflects a broader shift in policy thinking. It recognises that India's future growth, connectivity, and security are linked not only to its landmass but also to its extensive maritime domain. From a geographical perspective, this marks an important expansion of development planning; from a predominantly land-based approach to one that fully acknowledges the strategic and economic significance of India's oceans and island territories. Rural-Urban Integration and the Emergence of Connected Bharat

One notable feature of India's recent development trajectory has been the growing integration of rural and urban areas. For much of the post-Independence period, villages and cities were treated as distinct spheres of development, often separated by differences in infrastructure, access to services, and economic opportunities. Over the past decade, however, improved connectivity and expanding digital infrastructure have begun to narrow this divide.

Investments in rural roads, broadband networks, financial inclusion, digital payments, housing, and public service delivery have strengthened the links between rural communities and wider economic networks. Farmers can increasingly access markets and information through digital platforms, students can benefit from online educational resources, and small entrepreneurs can reach customers beyond their immediate localities.

These developments are contributing to the emergence of a more connected Bharat, where opportunities are no longer confined by geographical location. The benefits extend beyond economic growth. Better connectivity enhances access to education, healthcare, and public services, promotes social integration, and helps reduce migration driven by the lack of local opportunities. The broader objective is not simply to extend urbanisation into rural areas, but to ensure that people in every part of the country can participate more fully in the nation's development process.

Governance through Geospatial Technologies

An important feature of contemporary governance

has been the increasing use of geospatial technologies in planning, monitoring, and implementation. Satellite imagery, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing, drone surveys, and the digitisation of land records have strengthened governments' ability to make informed decisions and deliver programmes more effectively.

These technologies are now widely used across sectors. Infrastructure projects benefit from spatial mapping and route optimisation, while agriculture is increasingly supported by satellite-based monitoring of crops and natural resources. In disaster management, real-time mapping helps authorities assess risks and coordinate relief operations. Urban planning and environmental management have also become more data-oriented through the application of GIS and remote-sensing tools.

The growing use of geospatial information has improved accuracy, transparency, and administrative efficiency. It has enabled planners to identify local needs more precisely and to monitor outcomes more effectively than before.

More broadly, the adoption of these technologies reflects a significant shift in the practice of governance. Public administration is becoming increasingly evidence-based, drawing upon spatial data to support planning and decision-making. In this respect, the convergence of geography and technology is emerging as an important factor in shaping India's development trajectory.

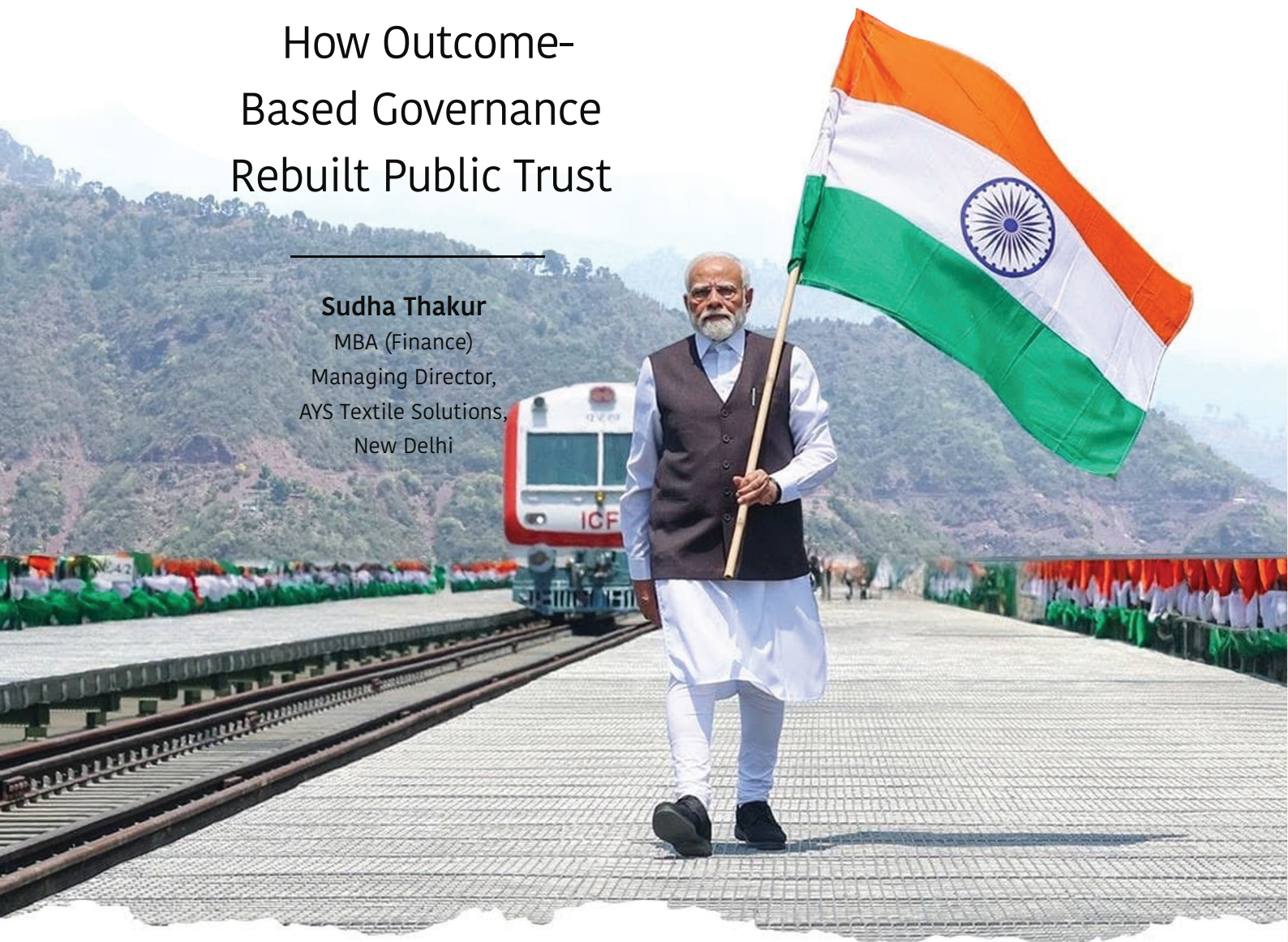
Results, Not Intentions

How Outcome-Based Governance Rebuilt Public Trust

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The concept of good governance has occupied an increasingly central place in contemporary public discourse. Although definitions vary, good governance generally refers to a system characterised by transparency, accountability, efficiency, responsiveness, participation, and rule-based administration.

Historically, one of the major challenges confronting developing societies has been the gap between policy formulation and policy

implementation. Governments may announce ambitious programmes, yet citizens often judge governance by actual outcomes rather than intentions. Over the past decade, considerable emphasis has been placed on improving the effectiveness of governance delivery. Digital technologies, direct benefit transfers, financial inclusion initiatives, online service platforms, and outcome-based monitoring mechanisms have sought to strengthen state capacity and improve citizen experiences.

The broader significance of these reforms lies in their impact on public trust. Citizens are more likely to engage constructively with institutions when governance is perceived as efficient, transparent, and responsive. Thus, good governance is not merely an administrative objective; it is also a mechanism for strengthening democratic legitimacy. The growing emphasis on measurable outcomes and citizen-centric administration reflects an effort to shift governance from a process-oriented bureaucracy to a results-oriented public service.

Transparency and Accountability in the Digital Age
Transparency and accountability are among the most important pillars of democratic governance. Citizens expect public institutions to function fairly, efficiently, and responsibly. In an era of increasing complexity, technology has emerged as a powerful tool for strengthening these principles. India's digital governance initiatives have transformed many aspects of public administration. The expansion of digital platforms, direct benefit transfers, online procurement systems, digital identity frameworks, and real-time monitoring mechanisms has increased transparency in service delivery and public expenditure. The significance of these reforms extends beyond administrative efficiency. They contribute to the creation of trust-based governance. Citizens are more likely to support institutions when processes are transparent, and outcomes are visible.

Accountability has also acquired a new dimension in the digital age. Governments are increasingly expected to respond quickly to citizen concerns, provide accessible information, and demonstrate measurable performance. Technology has enhanced both the state's capacity to deliver services and society's ability to evaluate governance outcomes. The result is a more interactive relationship between citizens and institutions.

Citizen Trust: The Invisible Infrastructure of Development

Infrastructure is often associated with highways, railways, airports, and digital networks. Yet every

successful society also depends upon an invisible infrastructure: trust. Trust reduces transaction costs, facilitates cooperation, strengthens institutions, and enhances social cohesion. Without trust, even the most sophisticated governance systems struggle to achieve their objectives.

One notable aspect of India's recent transformation has been the effort to strengthen citizens' confidence in public institutions. Welfare delivery mechanisms, digital governance platforms, financial inclusion initiatives, and expanded public services have contributed to this process. Trust is particularly important in a democratic society. Democratic governance ultimately relies upon citizens' belief that institutions serve the public interest and that participation can influence outcomes.

The relationship between governance and trust is reciprocal. Effective governance builds trust, and trust enhances governance effectiveness. Together, they create the social capital necessary for long-term development.

Cultural Confidence and the Reassertion of National Identity

While governance reforms are essential, they alone cannot explain the broader transformation of contemporary India. Equally important has been the growing emphasis on cultural confidence and civilizational identity. For much of the twentieth century, modernisation was often understood as a process that required societies to distance themselves from traditional identities. Contemporary India increasingly reflects a different perspective. Economic modernisation and cultural rootedness are no longer viewed as contradictory. The revival of interest in India's civilizational heritage, historical achievements, spiritual traditions, indigenous knowledge systems, and cultural symbols has contributed to a renewed sense of national confidence. This cultural confidence is significant because development is ultimately a psychological as well as economic process. Societies that believe in themselves are often more capable of undertaking ambitious collective projects. National self-confidence

encourages innovation, resilience, and long-term thinking.

The emphasis on cultural identity does not imply withdrawal from the world. Rather, it reflects an effort to engage globally while remaining rooted in indigenous traditions and values. The emergence of a culturally confident India has therefore become an important dimension of national transformation.

Swachh Bharat: Governance through Behavioural Change

Perhaps no initiative better illustrates the connection between governance and social transformation than the Swachh Bharat Mission. At one level, Swachh Bharat was an infrastructure programme focused on sanitation and cleanliness. Yet its deeper significance lay in its emphasis on behavioural change.

Traditional governance approaches often rely primarily on regulations, incentives, and public expenditure. Swachh Bharat demonstrated the importance of citizen participation and social awareness. The programme sought not merely to construct toilets but to transform attitudes toward sanitation, hygiene, and public spaces. The campaign mobilised schools, communities, local governments, civil society organisations, and citizens across the country. Cleanliness became a national conversation rather than merely an administrative responsibility.

From a governance perspective, Swachh Bharat represents an important lesson: sustainable transformation occurs when citizens internalise developmental goals. Behavioural change can amplify the impact of public policy far beyond what government action alone can achieve. The initiative thus became a powerful example of governance operating through social mobilisation.

Jan Bhagidari: The Democratisation of Development
A defining characteristic of contemporary

governance has been the emphasis on Jan Bhagidari, or public participation. Development has traditionally been viewed as a process led by governments and implemented through administrative structures. Increasingly, however, there is recognition that lasting progress requires active citizen involvement.

Jan Bhagidari seeks to transform citizens from passive beneficiaries into active stakeholders. Whether in sanitation campaigns, environmental initiatives, digital adoption, local governance, entrepreneurship, or social welfare programmes, public participation has become an important component of policy implementation. This approach reflects a broader democratic philosophy.

Governance is most effective when citizens view national development as a shared responsibility rather than an exclusively governmental obligation.

Public participation also strengthens accountability and ownership. Citizens who contribute to developmental initiatives are more likely to sustain and protect the outcomes. The growing emphasis on Jan Bhagidari therefore represents a significant evolution in the practice of democratic governance.

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Nation-Building through Social Mobilisation

Throughout history, major national transformations have required more than administrative capacity. They have depended upon collective effort and social mobilisation. India's freedom movement succeeded because it transformed political aspirations into a mass societal movement. Similarly, contemporary developmental initiatives increasingly seek to generate broad-based public engagement.

Campaigns related to cleanliness, water conservation, digital adoption, environmental protection, local production, and civic responsibility illustrate this trend. The objective is to create a culture in which citizens participate actively in national priorities. Social mobilisation serves

several important functions. It enhances public awareness, strengthens community cooperation, encourages behavioural change, and generates a sense of collective ownership.

Most importantly, it transforms development from a governmental project into a societal mission. The success of many contemporary initiatives reflects the recognition that governance and society must work together to achieve transformational outcomes.

The Emergence of a Confident New India

One of the most striking features of the past decade has been the emergence of a more confident national mood. This confidence manifests itself in multiple domains. Economically, India increasingly sees itself as a major global growth engine. Technologically, it has demonstrated capabilities in digital governance, space exploration, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Diplomatically, it has emerged as a leading voice of the Global South. Culturally, it has displayed greater willingness to celebrate its civilizational heritage.

National confidence is difficult to quantify, yet its influence is profound. It shapes aspirations, expectations, and collective behaviour. Confident societies are more likely to embrace innovation, undertake ambitious reforms, and engage proactively with global challenges.

Importantly, this confidence has been accompanied by growing public expectations. Citizens increasingly demand higher standards of governance, better services, stronger institutions, and greater opportunities. In this sense, confidence becomes both an achievement and a responsibility. The emergence of New India therefore reflects not only changing realities but also changing aspirations.

Governance, Society, and National Psychology

The broader significance of India's recent transformation lies in the interaction between governance, society, and national psychology. Good governance improves public trust. Trust encourages participation. Participation strengthens social

capital. Cultural confidence enhances collective motivation. Together, these factors contribute to national transformation.

This interaction helps explain why development cannot be reduced solely to economic indicators. A nation may achieve growth without social cohesion, or administrative efficiency without public engagement. Truly transformative development requires alignment between institutions, citizens, and collective aspirations.

The Indian experience increasingly suggests that governance succeeds most effectively when it resonates with societal values and mobilises public participation. Development becomes more sustainable when citizens perceive themselves as active contributors rather than passive recipients. In this sense, governance is not merely about managing society; it is about inspiring society. Towards Viksit Bharat 2047

The Viksit Bharat 2047 represents the next stage of this journey. A developed India will require continued economic growth, technological innovation, infrastructure expansion, and institutional reform. Yet it will also require social cohesion, cultural confidence, democratic participation, and public trust.

The lessons of the past twelve years suggest that these dimensions are interconnected. Administrative efficiency creates opportunities. Cultural confidence provides direction. Citizen participation generates momentum. The challenge ahead lies in sustaining this synergy while addressing emerging economic, social, environmental, and geopolitical challenges. The pursuit of Viksit Bharat therefore represents not merely a developmental objective but a broader civilizational project.

Connecting the Margins

How Infrastructure Is Rewriting India's National Map

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The relationship between infrastructure and nation-building is as old as civilisation itself. Great empires and successful states have historically relied upon transportation and communication networks to maintain political unity and economic vitality. In a country as vast and diverse as India, this relationship acquires even greater importance. The Indian Union encompasses mountains, deserts, forests, islands, coastal regions, river valleys, megacities, and remote border settlements. Such diversity enriches the nation culturally, but it also presents substantial governance and developmental challenges.

Connectivity is therefore not merely an engineering concern; it is a political and social necessity. Regions that are well connected tend to experience greater economic opportunities, stronger institutional linkages, and enhanced participation in national life. Conversely, disconnected regions often face developmental disadvantages and feelings of marginalisation.



The infrastructure strategy of recent years increasingly reflects this understanding. The objective is not only to build assets but also to integrate spaces, communities, and economies into a more cohesive national framework. In this sense, infrastructure has become one of the most important instruments of contemporary nation-building.

Bharatmala: Redefining India's Road Geography

Among the most ambitious infrastructure initiatives undertaken in recent years is the Bharatmala Pariyojana. Historically, India's road development often focused on connecting major cities and economic centres. While this approach improved mobility, many regions remained inadequately linked to emerging growth networks.

Bharatmala seeks to address this challenge through a comprehensive approach to highway development. Instead of viewing roads as isolated projects, the programme emphasises corridor-based connectivity, economic integration, border access, and logistics efficiency. The significance of Bharatmala lies in its ability to reshape spatial relationships across the country. Improved highways reduce travel times, lower transportation costs, and expand market access for businesses and farmers. More importantly, they bring previously peripheral regions into mainstream economic activity.

Highways connecting remote districts, border regions, industrial clusters, and ports contribute to a more integrated national economy. The resulting connectivity strengthens both economic opportunities and national cohesion. In many ways, Bharatmala represents the creation of a modern transportation spine for a rapidly transforming India.

Sagarmala and India's Maritime Reawakening

For centuries, India's prosperity was closely linked to its maritime geography. Yet in the modern era, maritime infrastructure often remained underutilised relative to the country's vast coastline and strategic location. The Sagarmala Programme seeks to address this gap by promoting port modernisation, coastal connectivity, logistics

efficiency, and maritime-led development.

The initiative reflects a growing recognition that India's future economic growth is increasingly connected to the seas. Ports are not merely gateways for trade; they are catalysts for industrial development, logistics networks, employment generation, and regional growth. By linking ports with highways, railways, industrial corridors, and inland transport systems, Sagarmala contributes to both domestic integration and global connectivity. The programme also has strategic implications. A stronger maritime infrastructure enhances India's role in the Indo-Pacific while strengthening economic resilience. Thus, Sagarmala represents not merely a port development strategy but a broader effort to reconnect India with its maritime heritage and opportunities.

Vande Bharat and the Transformation of Rail Connectivity

Railways have long been one of the strongest symbols of Indian unity. They connect distant regions, facilitate mobility, and serve as a lifeline for millions of citizens. In recent years, the introduction of Vande Bharat trains has come to symbolise a new phase in India's railway modernisation. These trains represent not only technological advancement but also a changing vision of public transportation.

The significance of Vande Bharat lies in its contribution to shrinking distances between major urban centres and regional hubs. Faster travel improves business connectivity, tourism, educational opportunities, and social interaction. At a broader level, railway modernisation contributes to national integration by strengthening inter-regional mobility. Citizens increasingly experience India as a connected and accessible space rather than a collection of isolated regions. The modernisation of railway stations, freight systems, dedicated freight corridors, and passenger services further reinforces this transformation. Together, these developments are redefining the role of railways in twenty-first-century India.

Air Connectivity and the Democratisation of Mobility

For many decades, air travel in India remained concentrated among metropolitan centres and relatively affluent populations. Large parts of the country had limited access to aviation infrastructure. The expansion of airports and regional connectivity initiatives has significantly altered this landscape. Smaller cities, remote regions, and emerging economic centres are increasingly being integrated into national aviation networks.

The broader significance of air connectivity lies in its ability to reduce geographical isolation. Improved access to aviation facilitates tourism, business investment, healthcare access, educational opportunities, and regional development. Airports also function as symbols of inclusion. When previously neglected regions become connected through modern aviation infrastructure, they gain visibility and opportunities within the broader national economy. This democratisation of mobility contributes to a more balanced and integrated development trajectory.

Northeast Connectivity: Integrating India's Eastern Frontier

Few regions illustrate the transformative power of infrastructure more clearly than Northeast India. The Northeast's rich cultural diversity and strategic significance have long been accompanied by challenges related to difficult terrain, limited connectivity, and historical isolation from major economic centres.

Over the past decade, substantial investments in roads, railways, bridges, airports, digital networks, and border infrastructure have sought to address these constraints. The construction of major bridges, the expansion of rail networks, the development of highways, and the enhancement of air connectivity have significantly improved regional accessibility. These investments are helping integrate the Northeast more closely with national markets and governance systems.

Equally important is the region's growing role as India's gateway to Southeast Asia under the Act East Policy. Enhanced connectivity has transformed the Northeast from a perceived periphery into a strategic bridge linking India with broader Asian economic networks. The region's experience demonstrates how infrastructure can convert geographical challenges into developmental opportunities.

Border Infrastructure and Strategic Integration

Historically, infrastructure development in border regions often proceeded slowly due to difficult terrain, security concerns, and limited economic activity. However, contemporary strategic thinking increasingly recognises that strong border infrastructure is essential for both national security and regional development.

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Infrastructure also shapes perceptions. Roads reaching remote villages, trains connecting distant regions, airports serving smaller cities & digital services accessible across the country reinforce a sense of belonging & inclusion.

Roads, tunnels, bridges, telecommunications networks, and logistics facilities in border areas enhance mobility, strengthen defence preparedness, and improve civilian livelihoods. The philosophy underlying recent initiatives is significant. Border regions are no longer viewed merely as defensive frontiers but as active components of national development.

Improved infrastructure reduces isolation, supports local economies, encourages tourism, and strengthens communities' presence in strategically important areas. The development of border infrastructure thus contributes simultaneously to security, integration, and economic growth.

Logistics and Economic Integration

One of the most important yet less visible aspects of infrastructure development is logistics. Economic integration depends not only on transportation assets but also on the efficiency with which goods move across regions. High logistics costs can undermine competitiveness and reinforce regional disparities.

The emergence of multimodal logistics parks, dedicated freight corridors, integrated transport

systems, and digital logistics platforms reflects a growing emphasis on efficiency and connectivity. These developments are helping create a more unified national market. Producers in one region can increasingly access consumers in another region at lower cost and with shorter delivery times.

From a nation-building perspective, logistics integration strengthens economic interdependence among states and regions. Such interdependence promotes shared prosperity and reinforces the bonds of national unity. Infrastructure therefore serves not only as a physical connector but also as an economic integrator.

Digital Infrastructure: The New Highway of Integration

In the twenty-first century, national integration depends as much on digital connectivity as on physical infrastructure. Broadband networks, mobile connectivity, digital public infrastructure, and online service platforms have transformed the way citizens interact with markets, institutions, and one another.

Digital infrastructure reduces the significance of geographical distance. A student in a remote village can access educational resources. A farmer can obtain market information. An entrepreneur can participate in e-commerce. Citizens can access public services without travelling long distances.

The expansion of digital connectivity has therefore created a new layer of national integration. Importantly, digital infrastructure complements physical infrastructure rather than replacing it. Together, they create a multidimensional connectivity ecosystem capable of supporting inclusive development. In many respects, digital networks represent the highways of the future.

Infrastructure as a Tool of Nation-Building

The cumulative impact of these initiatives extends beyond economic indicators and engineering achievements. Infrastructure contributes to nation-building in multiple ways. It reduces regional disparities, strengthens market integration, enhances social mobility, improves access to public services, promotes cultural interaction, and

reinforces strategic security.

A well-connected nation is more resilient, more competitive, and more cohesive. Citizens are better able to participate in national life when physical and digital barriers are minimized. Infrastructure also shapes perceptions. Roads reaching remote villages, trains connecting distant regions, airports serving smaller cities, and digital services accessible across the country reinforce a sense of belonging and inclusion. The result is the gradual emergence of a more integrated national space.

Towards the New Geography of India

The most enduring legacy of recent infrastructure development may lie in the creation of what can be called a new geography of India. Traditional distinctions between core and periphery are increasingly being challenged. Border regions are becoming growth frontiers. The Northeast is emerging as a strategic gateway. Coastal regions are gaining renewed importance through maritime development. Smaller cities are becoming economic hubs. Rural areas are integrating more closely with urban markets.

Infrastructure is the catalyst behind this transformation. By connecting people, places, and opportunities, it is helping create a more balanced and interconnected developmental landscape. The resulting geography is not merely physical; it is economic, social, strategic, and psychological.

No Longer Managing Shortages

India's Historic Shift from Scarcity to Structural Strength

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Since the adoption of the Republic's Constitution in 1950, India has been a vibrant theatre of democratic exercises, witnessing a cyclical succession of electoral mandates and shifting political regimes. Yet, for over six decades, the foundational template of Indian governance remained fundamentally defensive, perpetually trapped in a model of managing systemic scarcity. National planning was habitually occupied with the anxieties of deficits, balancing chronic shortfalls in everything from food production to foreign exchange reserves. The post-2014 era marks a significant departure from this historical inertia. Under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, this new Bharat has consciously shifted its structural engine from the administration of shortage to the engineering of systemic abundance. By aggressively scaling up domestic production capabilities, expanding energy grids, and implementing decisive policy reforms, India has rewritten its economic destiny, replacing a legacy of vulnerability with an unshakeable surplus economy.

This structural redirection is vividly illustrated in the global macroeconomic hierarchy. A little over a decade ago, international financial consortia routinely categorised India among the volatile Fragile Five, which meant a nation vulnerable to currency fluctuations, sluggish growth, and chronic policy paralysis. Today, that structural frailty has been replaced by greater flexibility, positioning India firmly as the world's fifth-largest economy, with a gross domestic product of 345 lakh crore rupees. The abyssal nature of this divergence was thrown into sharp relief during the recent G7 summit. While advanced Western economies are bogged down by stubborn stagflationary pressures, with collective G7 growth projected by the International Monetary Fund at a modest 1.5 per cent, India's National Statistical Office recorded an exceptional real GDP expansion of 7.7 per cent for the latest fiscal cycle. India's growth trajectory not only outpaces the advanced industrial economies but also comprehensively outstrips them, cementing Bharat's position as the primary locomotive of contemporary global growth.

At the core of this twelve-year journey is the emotional, structural, and digital unification of India. For decades, regional disparity and administrative fragmentation weakened the national fabric. The Modi government introduced revolutionary, pan-India schemes that dissolved these internal barriers, directly strengthening India's territorial and social integrity. One Nation, One Tax under the Goods and Services Tax framework was implemented to dismantle internal trade barriers, turning India into a single, unified domestic market and replacing a chaotic web of colonial-era state taxes. Alongside this, the One Nation, One Ration Card scheme became a monumental step for national integration, ensuring that India's migrant workforce can access food security anywhere in the country, in ways that reflect the spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat. This political and social unification reached its peak with the historic abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, which fully

integrated Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh into India's constitutional framework, ending decades of isolation and extending all central welfare schemes to the region's citizens. Simultaneously, the Vibrant Villages Programme turned things around on the frontiers. By transforming remote border villages from the last villages of India into the first villages of India, this initiative has fortified national security while deepening their integration into the mainstream economy.

This material discontinuity is fundamentally supporting an internal psychological liberation. India has aggressively emancipated its public discourse from a lingering colonial hangover, initiating a systemic campaign to decolonise the Indian mind and institutional frameworks. Instead

of operating as a passive consumer of borrowed Western socio-political theories, Bharat has emerged as an active thought leader, role shaper, and global agenda-setter. This systemic authority is fuelled by the explicit Vishwas, or trust, of 1.45 billion people. In a global landscape defined by volatile anti-incumbency and fragmented mandates, the Indian electorate has repeatedly reposed its civilisational faith in the current leadership. This unique,

uninterrupted democratic mandate has established Prime Minister Modi as the leader with the most continuous days in office among contemporary global democratic heads of state, endowing the nation with a resilient institutional predictability and long-term strategic direction.

At the core of this long-term governance is the philosophy of Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi, which translates to development hand in hand with heritage. Far from being a mere rhetorical device, this synthesis acts as an active policy praxis. It dictates that modern administrative rules, technological innovations, and economic infrastructure must derive their operational framework directly from India's civilisational ethos, historical heroes, and indigenous values. Development is no longer measured by Western

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In economic empowerment, the registered startup ecosystem has exploded past 140,000, supported by the PM MUDRA Yojana, which has sanctioned 47 crore collateral-free loans, 70 % of which went to women entrepreneurs.

benchmarks of material consumption; it is established in the cultural ethos of the land. Consequently, this model turns the dominant Western axiom of the survival of the fittest, a capitalistic view that often leaves the vulnerable behind, completely on its head. Guided by the philosophy of Antyodaya, the Indian state positions the deliberate upliftment and structural survival of the weakest citizen as its central moral and operational objective.

Over the past twelve years, this ethos has manifested in the targeted execution of Yogakshema, the classical concept of public welfare, rooted in righteousness and state responsibility. According to official data from NITI Aayog and international monitoring bodies, this precise, saturation-based approach has successfully reduced the multidimensional poverty rate from 29.17 per cent to 11.28 per cent, freeing over 24.8 crore individuals from multidimensional deprivation. By utilising the transparent digital architecture of the Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile trinity to execute direct benefit transfers, the state has systematically engineered institutional leakages out of public distribution, saving over 3.48 lakh crore by filtering out ghost accounts. The delivery of welfare is no longer dependent on the whims of middlemen or political patronage; it has become an automated, dignity-driven entitlement. This is the hallmark of a highly functional, self-aware democratic state. By transforming basic human needs into verifiable civic rights, India has created a mature political culture in which every ordinary citizen is no longer a passive recipient of state charity but an active, sovereign stakeholder in the nation's journey.

This citizen-stakeholder matrix spans all key spheres of national life. In physical infrastructure, the National Highway network has expanded by over 60 per cent to cross 146,000 kilometres, while the indigenous Vande Bharat Express trains and the doubling of operational airports to over 150 via the UDAN scheme have democratised connectivity. In Digital India, the nation leads globally by processing over 46 per cent of real-time digital transactions, with the Unified Payments Interface

processing 14 to 16 billion transactions monthly. In national security and defence indigenisation, India has shifted from being a leading importer to achieving a record defence export of 23,622 crore rupees, alongside a 100 per cent reduction in the geographical footprint of Left-Wing Extremism under a zero-tolerance policy. In economic empowerment, the registered startup ecosystem has exploded past 140,000, supported by the PM MUDRA Yojana, which has sanctioned 47 crore collateral-free loans, 70 per cent of which went to women entrepreneurs. Social welfare has been redefined by the Ayushman Bharat scheme, which provides cashless health insurance to 55 crore people, and the Jal Jeevan Mission, which expands rural tap-water connectivity beyond 75 per cent. Culturally, the restoration of the grand Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir, the Kashi Vishwanath Dham, and the repatriation of over 400 stolen historical artefacts have fostered a great sense of civilisational pride. Globally, through an inclusive G20 Presidency that integrated the African Union, and leading groups like the International Solar Alliance, Bharat now commands international diplomacy as the true voice of the Global South.

Twelve years of the Modi government don't represent a political tenure; it is a saga of civilisational reset. It has unified the country administratively, emotionally, and digitally, successfully restoring trust and accelerating development across all sectors. As the youth of the nation, the responsibility falls upon us to carry this momentum forward into Amrit Kaal, ensuring that this hard-earned civilisational reset and structural transformation paves the way for a fully developed, prosperous, and proud Viksit Bharat by 2047.

विश्वास, विकास और जनकल्याण

मोदी युग के 12
स्वर्णिम वर्ष

डॉ. वृंदा काल्हेर

प्रदेश प्रमुख, पॉलिसी एंड रिसर्च
भाजपा युवा मोर्चा हरियाणा

“

जब नेतृत्व दूरदर्शी हो,
नीतियाँ जनोन्मुखी हों
और संकल्प राष्ट्रहित का
हो, तब परिवर्तन केवल
सरकारों का नहीं, बल्कि
युगों का होता है।”



वर्ष 2014 में जब श्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में केंद्र में नई सरकार बनी, तब भारत अनेक चुनौतियों से जूझ रहा था। भ्रष्टाचार, नीतिगत जड़ता, कमजोर अर्थव्यवस्था, बुनियादी सुविधाओं की कमी और वैश्विक मंचों पर सीमित प्रभाव जैसी समस्याएँ देश के सामने थीं। जनता ने परिवर्तन का विश्वास जताया और "सबका साथ, सबका विकास" के मंत्र के साथ आरम्भ हुई यह यात्रा आज बारह वर्षों के बाद "विश्वास, विकास और जनकल्याण" की एक ऐतिहासिक गाथा बन चुकी है।

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में बीते बारह वर्षों में भारत ने केवल आर्थिक या राजनीतिक उपलब्धियाँ ही प्राप्त नहीं की हैं, बल्कि एक नए आत्मविश्वास, सांस्कृतिक चेतना और वैश्विक नेतृत्व की ओर भी कदम बढ़ाए हैं। यह कालखंड वास्तव में "न्यू इंडिया" के निर्माण का स्वर्णिम अध्याय है।

आर्थिक परिवर्तन : विश्व की पाँचवीं सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था

2014 में भारत विश्व की दसवीं सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था था। आज भारत लगभग 4 ट्रिलियन डॉलर की अर्थव्यवस्था के साथ विश्व की पाँचवीं सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था बन चुका है और निकट भविष्य में तीसरे स्थान पर पहुँचने की ओर अग्रसर है। अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष (IMF) के अनुसार भारत विश्व की सबसे तेजी से बढ़ती प्रमुख अर्थव्यवस्थाओं में शामिल है। 2014 में प्रति व्यक्ति आय लगभग 86,000 रुपये थी, जो 2025 तक बढ़कर लगभग 2.4 लाख रुपये के आसपास पहुँच चुकी है। जीएसटी (GST), दिवाला एवं शोधन अक्षमता संहिता (IBC), प्रत्यक्ष लाभ अंतरण (DBT), उत्पादन आधारित प्रोत्साहन (PLI) योजना और डिजिटल भुगतान जैसी संरचनात्मक सुधारों ने भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को नई गति प्रदान की है। आज भारत में 1.8 लाख से अधिक स्टार्टअप पंजीकृत हैं, जिससे भारत विश्व का तीसरा सबसे बड़ा स्टार्टअप इकोसिस्टम बन गया है। यूनिकॉर्न कंपनियों की संख्या 100 से अधिक पहुँच चुकी है।

डिजिटल इंडिया : तकनीक के माध्यम से सशक्त नागरिक

2015 में आरम्भ हुआ "डिजिटल इंडिया" अभियान आज भारत की सबसे बड़ी सफलता की कहानियों में से एक है। इंटरनेट और मोबाइल तकनीक के माध्यम से शासन को पारदर्शी, सरल और सुलभ बनाया गया। आज भारत में 95 करोड़ से अधिक इंटरनेट उपयोगकर्ता हैं। यूनिफाइड पेमेंट इंटरफेस (UPI) ने डिजिटल भुगतान में क्रांति ला दी है। वर्ष 2024-25 में प्रतिमाह 18 अरब से अधिक UPI लेन-देन दर्ज किए गए, जो विश्व में सबसे अधिक हैं। जन धन, आधार और मोबाइल (JAM) त्रिशक्ति के माध्यम से सरकार ने प्रत्यक्ष लाभ अंतरण के जरिए लगभग 44 लाख करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की राशि लाभार्थियों के खातों में सीधे भेजी। इससे बिचौलियों और भ्रष्टाचार पर प्रभावी रोक लगी।

कोविड महामारी के दौरान विकसित "को-विन" प्लेटफॉर्म ने विश्व के सबसे बड़े टीकाकरण अभियान को सफल बनाया। 220 करोड़ से अधिक वैक्सीन डोज देकर भारत ने डिजिटल क्षमता और प्रबंधन कौशल का अद्भुत उदाहरण प्रस्तुत किया।

गरीब कल्याण और सामाजिक सुरक्षा : अन्त्योदय से राष्ट्रोदय तक प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने शासन के केंद्र में गरीब, वंचित और अंतिम पंक्ति के व्यक्ति को रखा। "अन्त्योदय" की अवधारणा को व्यवहार में उतारते हुए अनेक जनकल्याणकारी योजनाएँ प्रारम्भ की गईं।

प्रधानमंत्री जन धन योजना

55 करोड़ से अधिक बैंक खाते खोले गए, जिनमें महिलाओं की भागीदारी उल्लेखनीय रही। इससे करोड़ों परिवार पहली बार औपचारिक बैंकिंग व्यवस्था से जुड़े।

प्रधानमंत्री उज्ज्वला योजना

10 करोड़ से अधिक महिलाओं को निःशुल्क गैस कनेक्शन उपलब्ध कराए गए। इससे धुएँ से होने वाली बीमारियों में कमी आई और महिलाओं के जीवन की गुणवत्ता में सुधार हुआ।

प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना

ग्रामीण और शहरी क्षेत्रों में मिलाकर 4 करोड़ से अधिक पक्के घर बनाए गए। गरीब परिवारों को सम्मानजनक जीवन जीने का अवसर मिला।

आयुष्मान भारत योजना

दुनिया की सबसे बड़ी स्वास्थ्य बीमा योजना के अंतर्गत 55 करोड़ से अधिक नागरिकों को पाँच लाख रुपये तक का वार्षिक स्वास्थ्य बीमा उपलब्ध कराया गया। अब तक करोड़ों लोगों को निःशुल्क उपचार का लाभ मिल चुका है।

प्रधानमंत्री गरीब कल्याण अन्न योजना

कोविड काल में 80 करोड़ से अधिक लोगों को निःशुल्क राशन उपलब्ध कराकर भारत ने मानवीय संवेदनाओं का अनुपम उदाहरण प्रस्तुत किया।

महिला सशक्तिकरण : नारी शक्ति से विकसित भारत

प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने महिलाओं को विकास का केंद्र बनाया। "बेटी बचाओ, बेटी पढ़ाओ" अभियान ने समाज में सकारात्मक परिवर्तन का वातावरण निर्मित किया। महिला स्व-सहायता समूहों को आर्थिक सहायता, मुद्रा योजना के माध्यम से ऋण, मातृत्व लाभ, सैन्य सेवाओं में महिलाओं की बढ़ती भागीदारी और संसद तथा विधानसभाओं में महिलाओं के लिए 33 प्रतिशत आरक्षण का ऐतिहासिक निर्णय, महिला सशक्तिकरण की दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण कदम हैं। आज ड्रोन दीदी योजना से लेकर लखपति दीदी अभियान तक, ग्रामीण महिलाओं को आत्मनिर्भर बनाने के प्रयास निरंतर जारी हैं।

बुनियादी ढाँचा : गति और प्रगति का नया भारत

पिछले बारह वर्षों में भारत में अभूतपूर्व आधारभूत विकास हुआ है। राष्ट्रीय राजमार्गों की लंबाई लगभग 91 हजार किलोमीटर से बढ़कर 1.5 लाख किलोमीटर से अधिक हो चुकी है। वंदे भारत एक्सप्रेस जैसी आधुनिक ट्रेनों ने भारतीय रेलवे को नई पहचान दी है। 1400 से अधिक रेलवे स्टेशनों का आधुनिकीकरण किया जा रहा है। हवाई अड्डों की संख्या 74 से बढ़कर लगभग 160 तक पहुँच चुकी है। उड़ान

योजना के माध्यम से छोटे शहरों को भी हवाई सेवाओं से जोड़ा गया है। अटल सेतु, चिनाब ब्रिज, दिल्ली-मुंबई एक्सप्रेसवे, पूर्वांचल एक्सप्रेसवे और समृद्धि महामार्ग जैसी परियोजनाएँ आधुनिक भारत की पहचान बन चुकी हैं।

आत्मनिर्भर भारत और विनिर्माण क्षेत्र

कोविड महामारी के बाद "आत्मनिर्भर भारत" अभियान ने भारत को उत्पादन और नवाचार का नया केंद्र बनाने की दिशा में प्रेरित किया। मोबाइल निर्माण के क्षेत्र में भारत ने उल्लेखनीय प्रगति की है। जहाँ 2014 में अधिकांश मोबाइल आयात किए जाते थे, वहीं आज भारत विश्व का दूसरा सबसे बड़ा मोबाइल निर्माता देश बन चुका है।

रक्षा उत्पादन में आत्मनिर्भरता बढ़ी है। 2014 में रक्षा निर्यात लगभग 700 करोड़ रुपये था, जो बढ़कर 24,000 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक हो चुका है। "मेक इन इंडिया" और पीएलआई योजनाओं ने इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स, सेमीकंडक्टर, रक्षा, फार्मा और अन्य क्षेत्रों में निवेश को आकर्षित किया है।

राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा : दृढ़ इच्छाशक्ति का परिचय

राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा के क्षेत्र में मोदी सरकार ने स्पष्ट और निर्णायक नीति अपनाई। 2016 की सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक और 2019 की बालाकोट एयर स्ट्राइक ने यह संदेश दिया कि भारत अपनी संप्रभुता की रक्षा के लिए सक्षम और प्रतिबद्ध है। जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 का हटाया जाना स्वतंत्र भारत के इतिहास के सबसे महत्वपूर्ण निर्णयों में से एक माना जाता है। इसके बाद वहाँ विकास, निवेश और लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रिया को नई गति मिली। सीमा क्षेत्रों में सड़कों, सुरंगों और पुलों का निर्माण तेजी से हुआ है, जिससे सामरिक क्षमता में वृद्धि हुई है।

सांस्कृतिक पुनर्जागरण : विरासत से विकास तक

मोदी सरकार के बारह वर्षों में भारत की सांस्कृतिक अस्मिता को भी नया सम्मान मिला है। अयोध्या में श्रीराम जन्मभूमि मंदिर का निर्माण करोड़ों भारतीयों की आस्था का प्रतीक बना। काशी विश्वनाथ धाम कॉरिडोर, महाकाल लोक और केदारनाथ पुनर्निर्माण जैसी परियोजनाओं ने सांस्कृतिक विरासत को आधुनिक स्वरूप प्रदान किया।

संयुक्त राष्ट्र द्वारा 21 जून को अंतरराष्ट्रीय योग दिवस घोषित किया जाना भारत की सांस्कृतिक शक्ति की वैश्विक स्वीकृति का प्रमाण है। नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 ने भारतीय ज्ञान परंपरा और आधुनिक शिक्षा के समन्वय का मार्ग प्रशस्त किया है।

विश्व मंच पर भारत का बढ़ता प्रभाव

आज भारत केवल एक विकासशील देश नहीं, बल्कि वैश्विक निर्णयों में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाने वाली शक्ति के रूप में उभरा है। जी-20 की अध्यक्षता के दौरान भारत ने "वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्" के मंत्र को विश्व के सामने प्रस्तुत किया। अफ्रीकी संघ को जी-20 की स्थायी सदस्यता दिलाना भारत के वैश्विक नेतृत्व का उदाहरण है।

चंद्रयान-3 की ऐतिहासिक सफलता ने भारत को चंद्रमा के दक्षिणी ध्रुव पर पहुँचने वाला विश्व का पहला देश बनाया। आदित्य-एल1 मिशन ने अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान के क्षेत्र में भारत की नई पहचान स्थापित की। आज भारत वैश्विक दक्षिण की आवाज के रूप में उभर रहा है। विश्व के अनेक देशों के साथ रणनीतिक, आर्थिक और सांस्कृतिक संबंध मजबूत हुए हैं।

पर्यावरण और हरित विकास

अंतरराष्ट्रीय सौर गठबंधन की स्थापना से लेकर हरित हाइड्रोजन मिशन तक, भारत ने जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रति अपनी जिम्मेदारी का परिचय दिया है। गैर-जीवाश्म ऊर्जा क्षमता 230 गीगावाट से अधिक पहुँच चुकी है। भारत विश्व में अक्षय ऊर्जा के क्षेत्र में अग्रणी देशों में शामिल है। मिशन लाइफ (Lifestyle for Environment) के माध्यम से सतत विकास को जन आंदोलन का स्वरूप देने का प्रयास किया गया है।

विकसित भारत 2047 : अगले चरण का संकल्प

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में भारत अब केवल वर्तमान की उपलब्धियों तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि वर्ष 2047 तक "विकसित भारत" के लक्ष्य की दिशा में आगे बढ़ रहा है। युवा शक्ति, तकनीकी नवाचार, आत्मनिर्भरता, सामाजिक समावेशन और सांस्कृतिक गौरव के आधार पर भारत एक विकसित, समृद्ध और आत्मविश्वासी राष्ट्र बनने की ओर अग्रसर है।

बारह वर्षों की यह यात्रा केवल सरकार की उपलब्धियों का लेखा-जोखा नहीं है; यह 140 करोड़ भारतीयों के सामूहिक संकल्प, विश्वास और आकांक्षाओं की कहानी है। यह वह कालखंड है जिसने भारत को निराशा से आशा की ओर, आश्रित मानसिकता से आत्मनिर्भरता की ओर और सीमित संभावनाओं से वैश्विक नेतृत्व की ओर अग्रसर किया है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में बीते बारह वर्षों ने यह सिद्ध किया है कि जब नीयत साफ हो, नीति स्पष्ट हो और नेतृत्व दृढ़ हो, तब परिवर्तन केवल संभव नहीं होता, बल्कि इतिहास का हिस्सा बन जाता है।

"12 वर्ष विश्वास के, 12 वर्ष विकास के, 12 वर्ष जनकल्याण के-यही है नए भारत की परिवर्तनकारी यात्रा, जो अमृतकाल में विकसित भारत के स्वप्न को साकार करने की दिशा में निरंतर आगे बढ़ रही है।

स्वास्थ्य, सम्मान और समाज महिला कल्याण के बारह वर्ष

विजयता पाण्डेय

जनसंचार एवं पत्रकारिता विषय
की पीएचडी शोधार्थी

किसी राष्ट्र की प्रगति को मापने के अनेक तरीके हो सकते हैं। अर्थशास्त्री उसे विकास दर में देखते हैं, योजनाकार आधारभूत संरचना में, जबकि नीति-निर्माता विभिन्न सामाजिक सूचकांकों में। लेकिन एक शिक्षक और शोधकर्ता के रूप में मुझे हमेशा लगता रहा है कि किसी भी समाज की वास्तविक प्रगति को समझने के लिए उसकी महिलाओं की स्थिति पर दृष्टि डालना अति आवश्यक है। महिलाएँ कितनी स्वस्थ हैं? वे स्वास्थ्य संबंधी निर्णय लेने में कितनी सक्षम हैं? और क्या समाज उन्हें गरिमापूर्ण जीवन जीने के लिए आवश्यक अवसर प्रदान कर रहा है? ये प्रश्न किसी भी विकास यात्रा के सबसे विश्वसनीय संकेतक हैं।

पिछले बारह वर्षों में भारत में महिला स्वास्थ्य को लेकर जो परिवर्तन दिखाई देते हैं, उन्हें केवल स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र की उपलब्धियों तक सीमित करके नहीं देखा जा सकता। यह परिवर्तन नीतियों, जनकल्याणकारी कार्यक्रमों, सामुदायिक भागीदारी और संचार माध्यमों के संयुक्त प्रयासों का परिणाम है। इस अवधि में स्वास्थ्य का विमर्श अस्पतालों और चिकित्सा सुविधाओं की सीमाओं से निकलकर स्वच्छता, पोषण, सुरक्षित मातृत्व, स्वच्छ ऊर्जा, डिजिटल जागरूकता और सामाजिक व्यवहार परिवर्तन तक विस्तृत हुआ है।

यह परिवर्तन अचानक नहीं आया। इसके पीछे एक लंबी प्रक्रिया रही है। जब वर्ष 2014 में स्वच्छ भारत अभियान प्रारम्भ हुआ, तब सार्वजनिक चर्चा का केंद्र केवल सफाई या कचरा प्रबंधन नहीं था। ग्रामीण भारत की लाखों महिलाओं के लिए शौचालय का निर्माण गरिमा, सुरक्षा और स्वास्थ्य से जुड़ा विषय था। वर्षों तक महिला स्वास्थ्य पर लिखते और पढ़ाते हुए मैंने पाया है कि स्वच्छता को अक्सर केवल अवसंरचना का प्रश्न मान लिया जाता है, जबकि वास्तव में यह सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य का मूल आधार है।

राष्ट्रीय परिवार स्वास्थ्य सर्वेक्षण (NFHS-5) के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि स्वच्छता सुविधाओं की उपलब्धता में उल्लेखनीय विस्तार हुआ है। लेकिन आंकड़े कहानी का केवल एक हिस्सा बताते हैं। वास्तविक परिवर्तन तब दिखाई देता है जब महिलाएँ स्वयं स्वास्थ्य और स्वच्छता को अपने अधिकार के रूप में देखने लगती हैं। यही वह बिंदु है जहाँ जनसंचार माध्यमों की भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण हो जाती है।



संचार विज्ञान का एक पुराना सिद्धांत कहता है कि मीडिया केवल सूचना का माध्यम नहीं है; वह सामाजिक प्राथमिकताओं को भी प्रभावित करता है। पिछले एक दशक में स्वास्थ्य, स्वच्छता और महिला कल्याण से जुड़े विषयों को जिस प्रकार राष्ट्रीय विमर्श में स्थान मिला, उसने स्वास्थ्य संबंधी अनेक मुद्दों को सार्वजनिक चर्चा का विषय बनाया। जिन प्रश्नों पर कभी घरों के भीतर धीमी आवाज़ में बात होती थी, वे अब समाचारों, चर्चाओं और डिजिटल मंचों पर दिखाई देने लगे।

मासिक धर्म स्वच्छता इसका एक उल्लेखनीय उदाहरण है। दो दशक पहले मुख्यधारा के समाचार पत्रों में इस विषय पर व्यवस्थित चर्चा मिलना कठिन था। आज स्थिति बदल रही है। विद्यालयों में संवाद बढ़ा है। स्वास्थ्य कार्यकर्ता समुदाय स्तर पर जागरूकता अभियान चला रही हैं। डिजिटल मंचों पर जानकारी उपलब्ध है। फिर भी यह मान लेना जल्दबाज़ी होगी कि समस्या पूरी तरह समाप्त हो चुकी है।

यूनिसेफ और विभिन्न सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य अध्ययनों से संकेत मिलता है कि आज भी बड़ी संख्या में किशोरियाँ वैज्ञानिक जानकारी, गुणवत्तापूर्ण स्वच्छता उत्पादों और स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं तक समान रूप से नहीं पहुँच पातीं। इसलिए हमें सूचना की उपलब्धता और व्यवहारगत परिवर्तन के बीच के अंतर को समझना होगा। किसी विषय पर चर्चा शुरू हो जाना और उस विषय से जुड़ी सामाजिक बाधाओं का समाप्त हो जाना, दोनों अलग-अलग प्रक्रियाएँ हैं।

महिला स्वास्थ्य के संदर्भ में पिछले बारह वर्षों की एक और महत्वपूर्ण उपलब्धि स्वच्छ ऊर्जा को लेकर दिखाई देती है। लंबे समय तक ग्रामीण महिलाओं के लिए भोजन बनाना घरेलू जिम्मेदारी का हिस्सा माना जाता रहा, लेकिन उससे जुड़ी स्वास्थ्य चुनौतियों पर अपेक्षित ध्यान नहीं दिया गया। पारंपरिक चूल्हों से निकलने वाला धुआँ श्वसन रोगों, आँखों की समस्याओं और अन्य स्वास्थ्य जोखिमों से जुड़ा रहा है।

उज्ज्वला योजना जैसी पहलों ने इस समस्या को नीति-निर्माण के केंद्र में लाने का प्रयास किया। लेकिन किसी भी नीति का मूल्यांकन केवल लाभार्थियों की संख्या से नहीं किया जाना चाहिए। एक शोधकर्ता का प्रश्न थोड़ा अलग होता है। क्या स्वच्छ ईंधन का नियमित उपयोग हो रहा है? क्या आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर परिवार उसे निरंतर वहन कर पा रहे हैं? क्या महिलाओं के स्वास्थ्य पर उसके दीर्घकालिक प्रभाव दिखाई दे रहे हैं? इन प्रश्नों के उत्तर भविष्य के शोध और नीति-विश्लेषण के लिए समान रूप से महत्वपूर्ण हैं।

मातृ स्वास्थ्य के क्षेत्र में भी उल्लेखनीय परिवर्तन दर्ज किए गए हैं। संस्थागत प्रसव, टीकाकरण और मातृ स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं की पहुँच में सुधार के संकेत विभिन्न राष्ट्रीय रिपोर्टों में दिखाई देते हैं। लेकिन यहाँ भी हमें केवल उपलब्धियों की सूची तैयार करने के बजाय यह समझना चाहिए कि स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं तक पहुँच और स्वास्थ्य परिणामों के बीच संबंध हमेशा सीधा नहीं होता। सामाजिक परिस्थितियाँ, शिक्षा, पारिवारिक समर्थन और स्थानीय स्वास्थ्य व्यवस्था भी समान रूप से प्रभाव डालती हैं।

यहीं पर आशा और आंगनवाड़ी कार्यकर्ताओं का योगदान विशेष महत्व रखता है। विकास संचार के अध्ययन में अक्सर कहा जाता है कि व्यवहार परिवर्तन केवल संदेशों से नहीं, बल्कि विश्वास से आता है। गाँव की आशा कार्यकर्ता कई बार उस विश्वास का स्रोत बन जाती है जिसे कोई राष्ट्रीय विज्ञापन अभियान अकेले नहीं बना सकता। स्वास्थ्य जागरूकता की वास्तविक कहानी केवल मीडिया स्टूडियो में नहीं, बल्कि उन घरों में लिखी जाती है जहाँ कोई स्वास्थ्य कार्यकर्ता नियमित रूप से पहुँचती है।

पिछले दशक में डिजिटल तकनीक ने इस प्रक्रिया को नई दिशा दी है। मोबाइल फोन और इंटरनेट के बढ़ते उपयोग ने स्वास्थ्य संबंधी जानकारी को अधिक सुलभ बनाया है। गर्भावस्था, पोषण, टीकाकरण और शिशु स्वास्थ्य से जुड़ी जानकारी अब पहले की तुलना में कहीं अधिक आसानी से उपलब्ध है। लेकिन इसके साथ विश्वसनीयता की एक नई चुनौती भी सामने आई है। सूचना की अधिकता हमेशा ज्ञान की गारंटी नहीं होती। कई बार भ्रम और तथ्य एक साथ प्रसारित होते हैं। इसलिए डिजिटल स्वास्थ्य के भविष्य को तकनीकी उपलब्धि के साथ-साथ सूचना साक्षरता के प्रश्न से भी जोड़कर देखना होगा।

यदि पिछले बारह वर्षों की यात्रा का समग्र मूल्यांकन किया जाए तो यह कहा जा सकता है कि महिला स्वास्थ्य को विकास के व्यापक विमर्श का हिस्सा बनाने का एक संगठित प्रयास दिखाई देता है। स्वच्छता, पोषण, मातृ स्वास्थ्य, स्वच्छ ऊर्जा और स्वास्थ्य जागरूकता जैसे विषय अब अलग-अलग खानों में नहीं देखे जाते। उन्हें विकास, गरिमा और सामाजिक न्याय के व्यापक ढाँचे में समझने की कोशिश हुई है।

फिर भी कुछ चुनौतियाँ हमारे सामने हैं। NFHS-5 के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि एनीमिया आज भी व्यापक समस्या है। कुपोषण, मानसिक स्वास्थ्य, ग्रामीण-शहरी असमानताएँ और स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं की गुणवत्ता से जुड़े प्रश्न भी पूरी तरह समाप्त नहीं हुए हैं। इसलिए उपलब्धियों को स्वीकार करने के साथ-साथ शेष चुनौतियों पर गंभीरता से विचार करना भी आवश्यक है।

अंततः महिला स्वास्थ्य का प्रश्न केवल चिकित्सा का प्रश्न नहीं है। यह अवसरों का प्रश्न है। यह सम्मान का प्रश्न है। यह विकास की उस अवधारणा का प्रश्न है जिसमें समाज के सबसे कमजोर वर्ग को भी प्रगति का सहभागी माना जाता है। पिछले बारह वर्षों की यात्रा को इसी दृष्टि से देखने पर स्पष्ट होता है कि स्वास्थ्य, संचार और जनकल्याण के बीच एक नया संबंध विकसित हुआ है। इस संबंध की मजबूती ही आने वाले वर्षों में भारत की विकास यात्रा को अधिक समावेशी और मानवीय स्वरूप प्रदान करेगी।

BHARATIYA JANATA YUVA MORCHA

